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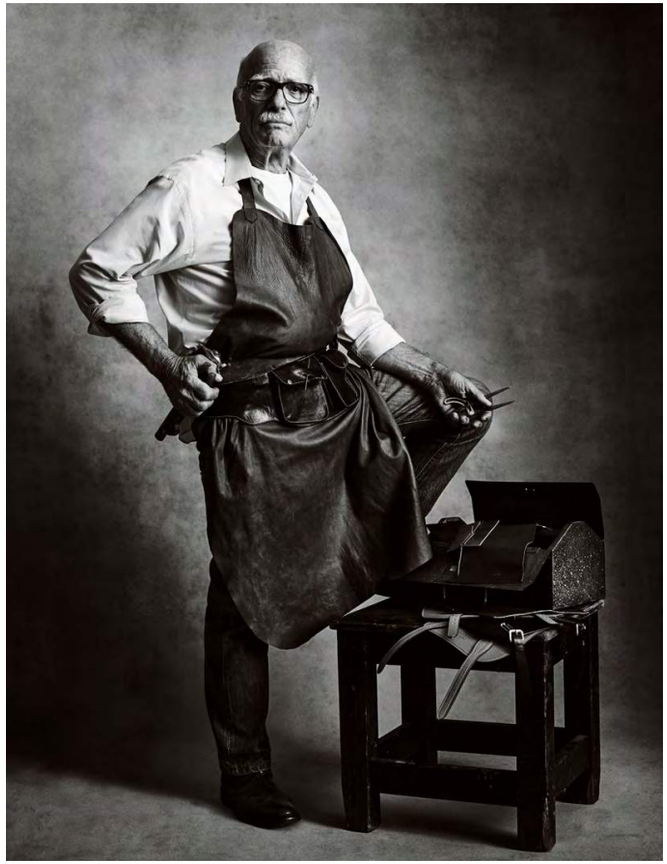

The Burberry Artisans
Piero Calosi, pattern maker for The Bridle bag, Italy

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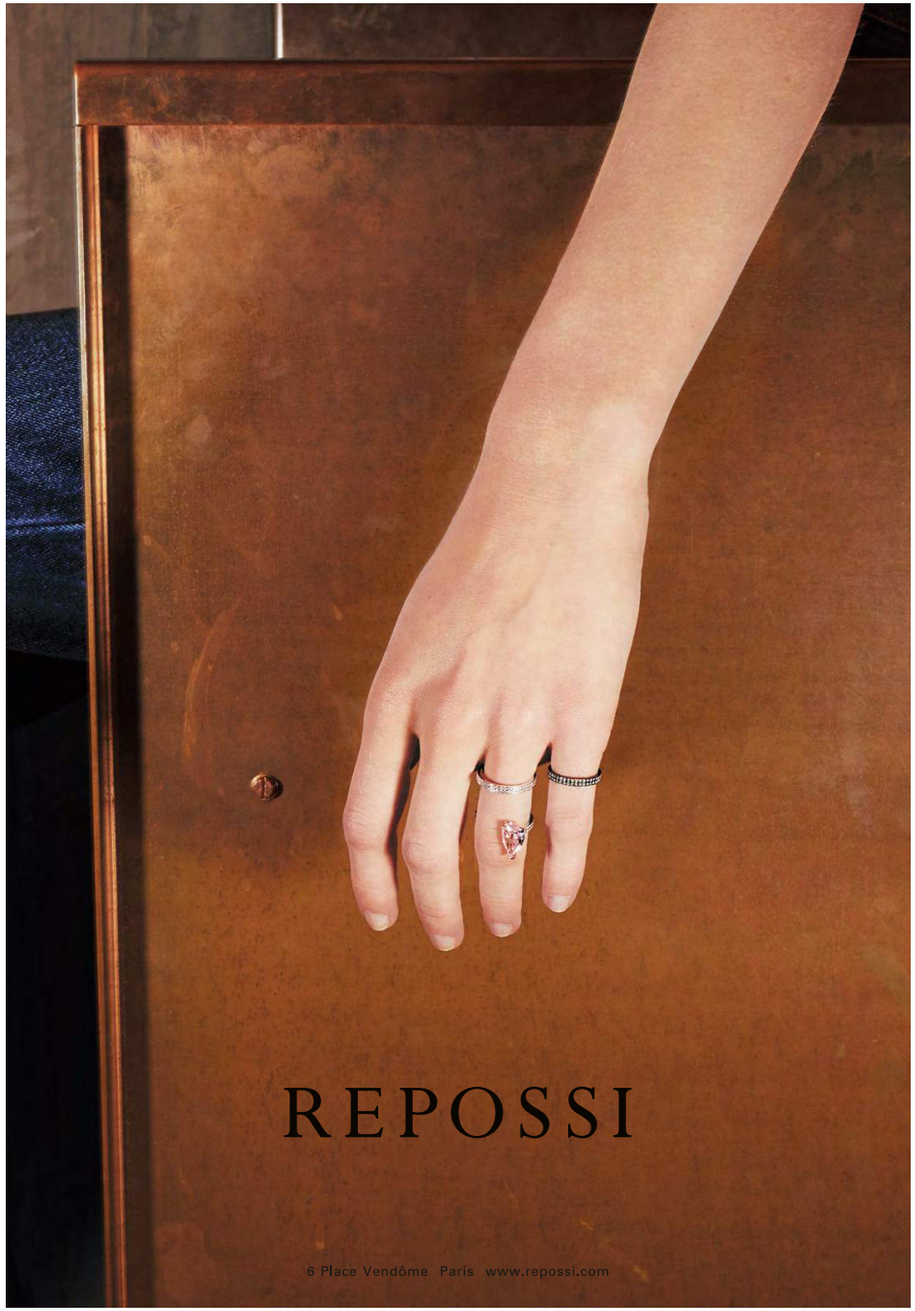
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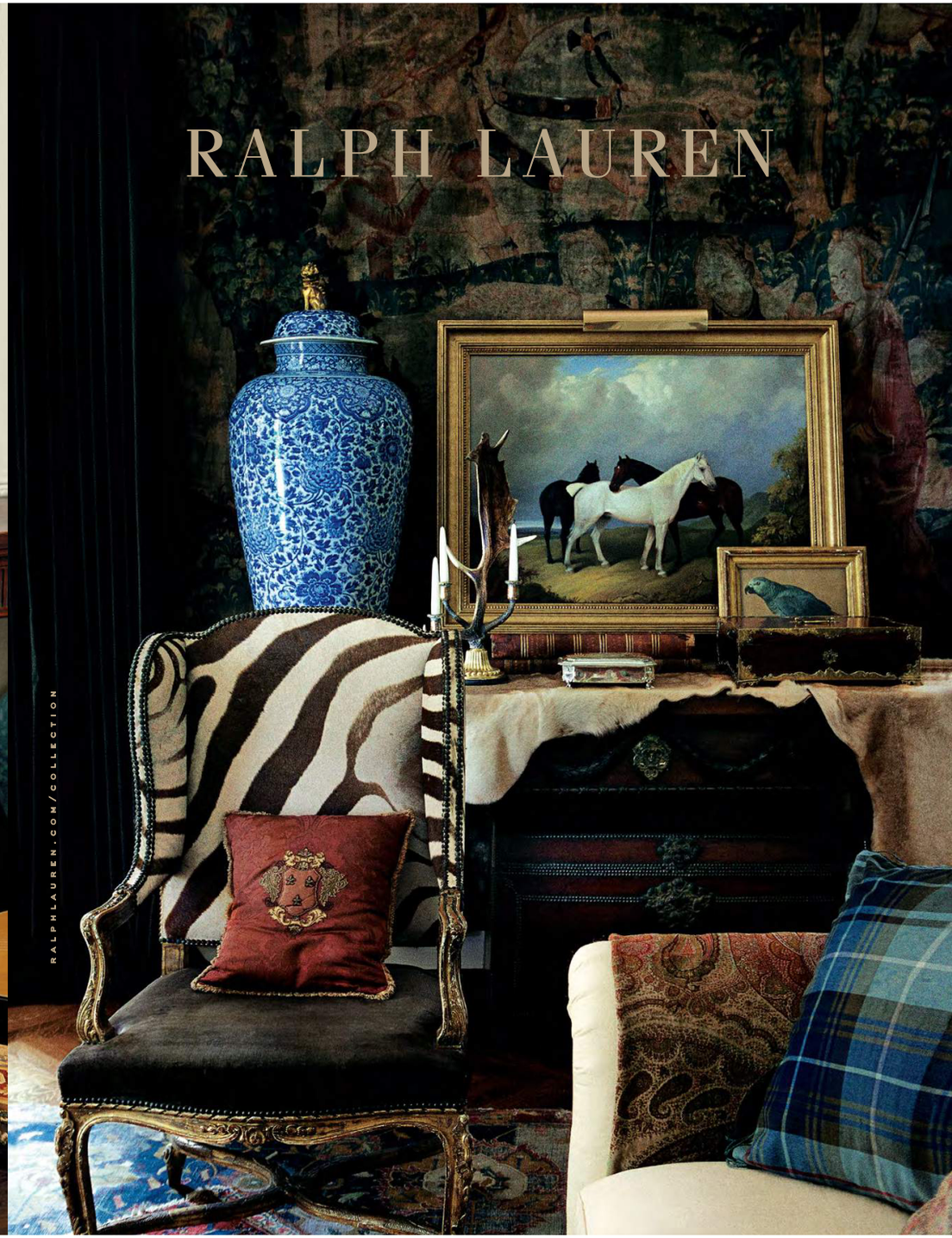
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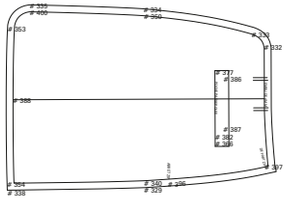

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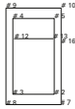

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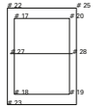

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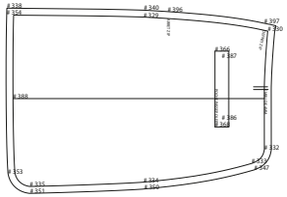

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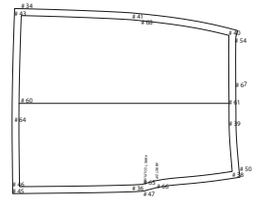

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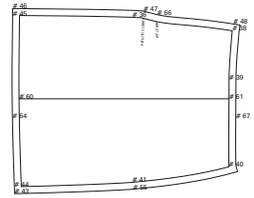

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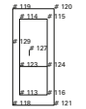

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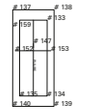

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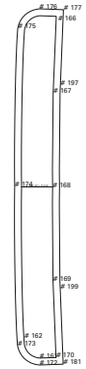

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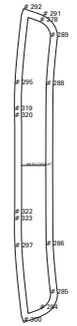

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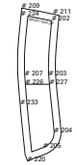

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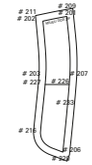

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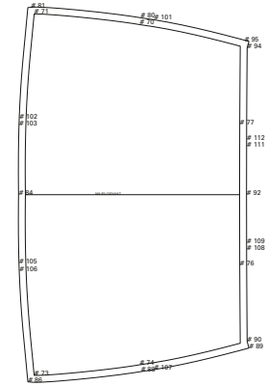

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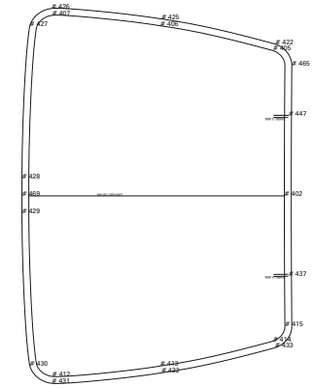

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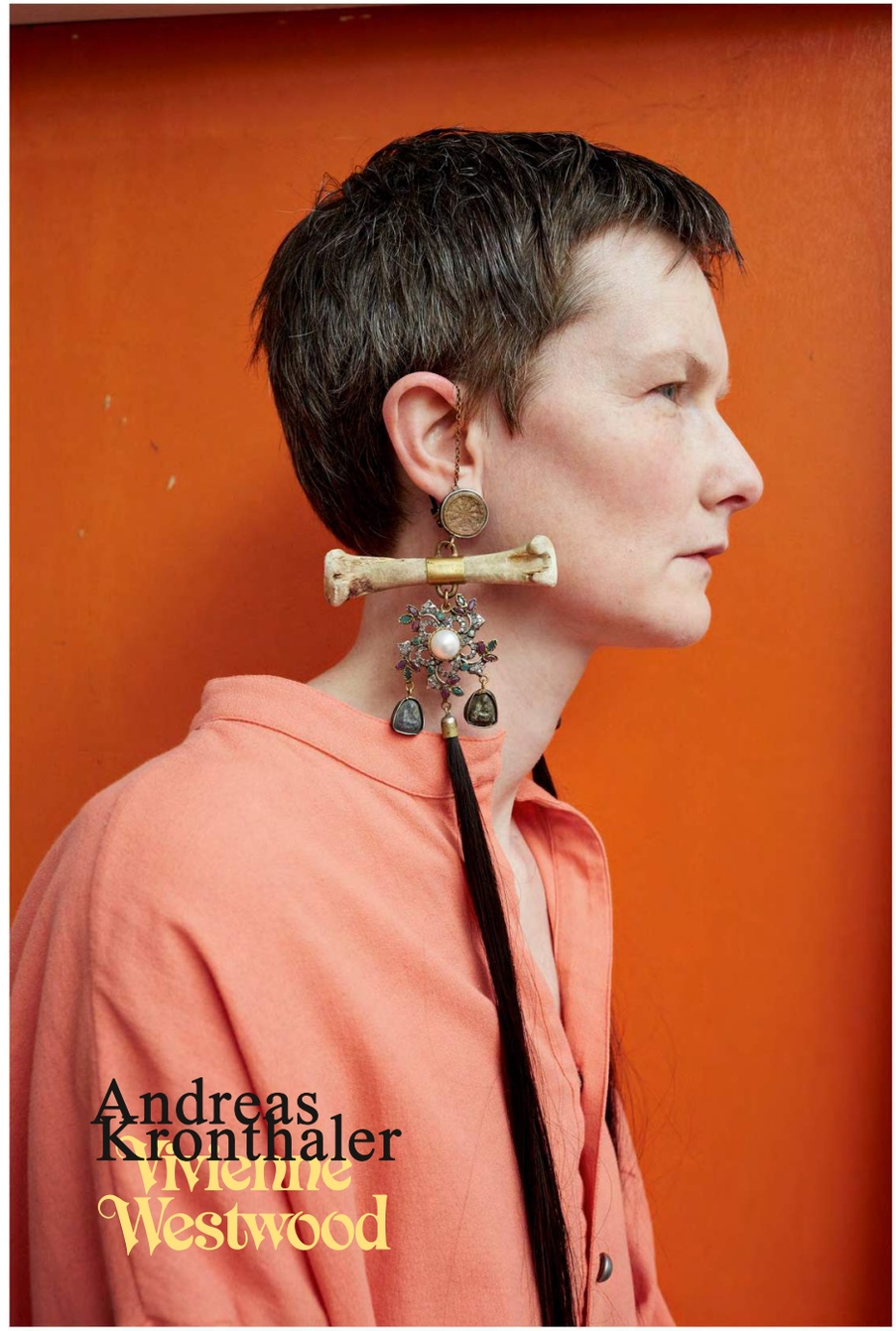

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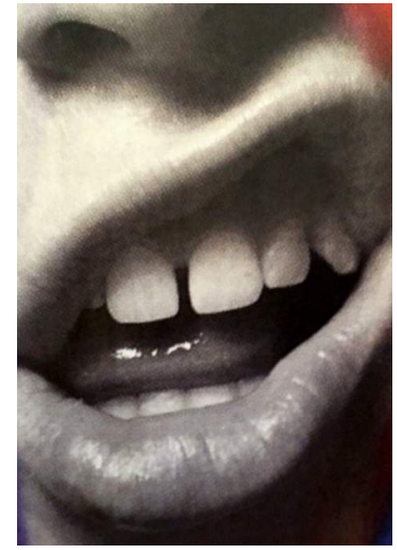

Steven Meisel
A Closer Look
2016

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Contributors

Alexander Fury lives in London, but is chief fashion correspondent of *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*. He recommends reading *The Prince* by Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli: 'Probably the best book about fashion you'll ever read.'

Alasdair McLellan is a photographer from Yorkshire, UK. He suggests we read Homer's *Odyssey*.

Annemarieke van Drimmelen is a photographer and filmmaker from Amsterdam. She's just started reading Keith Haring's journals: 'Well worth it for the personal insight into the extraordinary life of an incredible artist.'

Camille Bidault-Waddington is an art director and fashion editor. She recommends reading *Œuvre poétique* by Bernard Delvaille: 'It's difficult to put into words… but it makes me shiver.'

Charlotte Tilbury is a make-up artist. Born in France, she moved to Ibiza as a baby and now lives in London. She suggests we read *War Paint: Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein, Their Lives, Their Times, Their Rivalry* by Lindy Woodhead. 'Great rivals who shaped and inspired many in the beauty industry.'

Collier Schorr works as a photographer, and resides in Brooklyn. She's finishing up *A New Novel* by Bjarne Melgaard: 'It describes the underground sex scene as an antidote to the stifling charade of taste-makers in the art world – it's dark.'

Dennis Freedman is creative director at Barneys, New York. He's just read *The Morning They Came for Us: Dispatches from Syria* by Janine di Giovanni: 'A heartbreaking account of the personal tragedies that occur there daily, it is a call to action for the rest of the world.'

Elizabeth Jane Bishop is from Staffordshire, UK. She spends her days studying and blogging. She's reading *Generation Z: Their Voices, Their Lives* by Chloe Combi: 'Stories of Gen Zers written from a first-person perspective; it will make you laugh, and cry.'

Gregory Harris is a photographer. He grew up in New Zealand, and is now based in New York. He thinks we should consult *Redheaded Peckerwood*, a book by photographer Christian Patterson. It toes the line between fact and fiction: 'And it's awesome.'

Hannah Rogers is a postgraduate student at Central Saint Martins in London. She recently enjoyed *I Love Dick* by Chris Kraus: 'It took me ages to read, because I couldn't pick it up without someone wanting to talk about it.'

Hung Huang works as a publisher, TV presenter, and writer in Beijing. When she's not producing books, she's reading them, and recommends *China: Empire of Living Symbols* by Cecilia Lindqvist: 'I'm just trying to decipher my own culture.'

Jo-Ann Furniss is a writer and editor. She suggests we should read Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* by: 'A comic masterpiece and one of the most perfect pieces of writing in English. Whenever I am really pissed off – which is a lot of the time – it never fails to make me happy.'

Juergen Teller is a German photographer. He is also a professor at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nuremberg, whose students worked on this issue. He says to pick up *Sentimental Journey* by Nobuyoshi Araki: 'Why? Because it's good.'

Katie Grand is an editor and stylist. She lives in London. She thinks you should read anything by Judith Krantz. *Scruples* is her most famous work (as well as her first), so maybe start with that one.

Kinga Rajzak is a Hungarian model. She chose *The Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek: 'Make sure you read it in an environment where you don't disturb others – you'll laugh your head off.'

Loïc Prigent is a writer and director from Paris. He recommends reading Louis Vuitton's Rio de Janeiro *City Guide*: 'It has a very Proustian way of describing the backroom of a gay bar without using any of the words I did.'

Marie Chaix divides her time between Paris and New York, working in both as a stylist. She recommends *King Kong Theory*, a feminist text by Virginie Despentes, for a highly charged account of women's lives.

Norbert Schoerner is a German photographer and filmmaker. He has lived in London since the 1980s, but remains close to his roots, recently enjoying *How German Is It* by Walter Abish. Both satire and detective story, it's both 'funny and suspenseful'.

Pamela Golbin grew up in Buenos Aires, Caracas, Miami and New York. She now lives in Paris and is chief curator of fashion and textiles at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. She just wrote *Couture Confessions: Fashion Legends in Their Own Words*. We recommend it.

Tavi Gevinson is a writer, editor and actress based in New York. She recommends we read *Missing Out: In Praise of the Unlived Life* by Adam Phillips. He lays out what we gain when we think we're missing the point: 'It cracked open my brain and rearranged my way of thinking.'

Zoë Ghertner is a photographer and lives in Los Angeles. She says read *Helter Skelter* by Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry, a book about the murders committed by Charles Manson and his cult: 'You won't want to put it down.'

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Fall Winter 2016 2017

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Hand Painted Goya Bag with Flat Lock Charm, 2016

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#TLDR

Too Long Didn't Read. As current hashtag dismissals go, it's right up there with the best (or worst) of them. A kind of sulky teenager's 'yeah, whatever', fuelled by our ever-decreasing attention span. And while it's hardly news to suggest that social media doesn't exactly champion long-form reading or carefully deliberated opinion, the on-the-spot 'love-it/hate-it' rhetoric it promotes is having an increasingly malign influence on fashion.

Take Miuccia Prada as a pretty robust example of how #TLDR syndrome may be affecting designers. During the conversation she had with Raf Simons for this issue (p.70, 9,446 words), Mrs. Prada predicts that her comments will get taken out of context, distorted, shared on social media, and reduced to one inaccurate headline, leaving her and her company to be globally lambasted within hours of publication. Her solution? 'Self-censorship' or simply 'ceasing to speak in the public domain'. The consequence? 'Generic statements' or 'total isolation'. From Miuccia Prada? Ouch.

Burberry has never been shy of flexing its digital immediacy, yet within seconds of Christopher Bailey's see-now-buy-now announcement in February, it nonetheless felt like the entire industry had waded in, offering only the kind of polarizing statements that characterize so much of today's public 'debate'.

Don't get us wrong – we love the digital world (if you visit www.system-magazine.com, you'll see that we've even got round to digitalizing our content). We also love instinctive opinion. And yes, we love a bit of social media Schadenfreude as much as the next troll. But if all this leads fashion to temper its flights of fancy – where the less likely we are to upset anyone, the better it is for business – we'll all wake up in the near-distant future bland, beige and bored.

Before that happens, though, try to find 25 minutes to read Central Saint Martins student Hannah Rogers' 8,260-word interview (p.290) with Christopher Bailey, conducted over a period of three months. You'll find that given the time and context in which to express himself, Bailey – like Mrs Prada, and many other designers – makes a compelling and wholly rational case for what he thinks makes sense.

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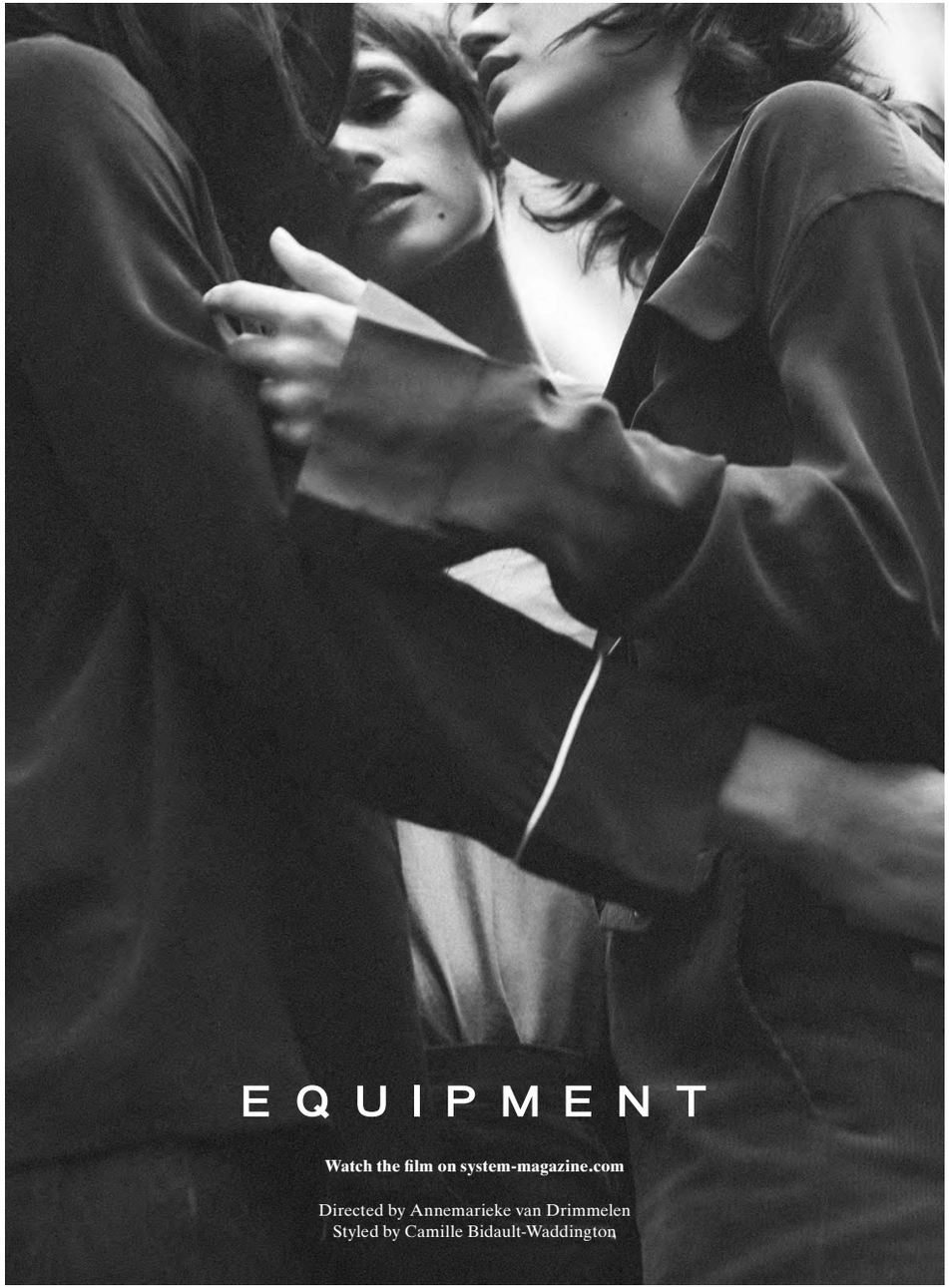

EQUIPMENT
Watch the film on system-magazine.com
Directed by Annemarieke van Drimmelen
Styled by Camille Bidault-Waddington

‘There’s something wrong about big brands.’

The inimitable Miuccia Prada.

Few, if any, designers match the mind and mindset of Miuccia Prada.

At a time when fashion houses seem increasingly judged on their financial form – like some kind of results-based sporting contest – we can sometimes lose sight of just how unique a voice she is. Intimate yet operating at scale, never afraid to contradict or backtrack, and offering a female presence that’s defined only by its wonderfully unpredictable nature – formidable one moment, frivolous the next – there has always been more than one Miuccia Prada.

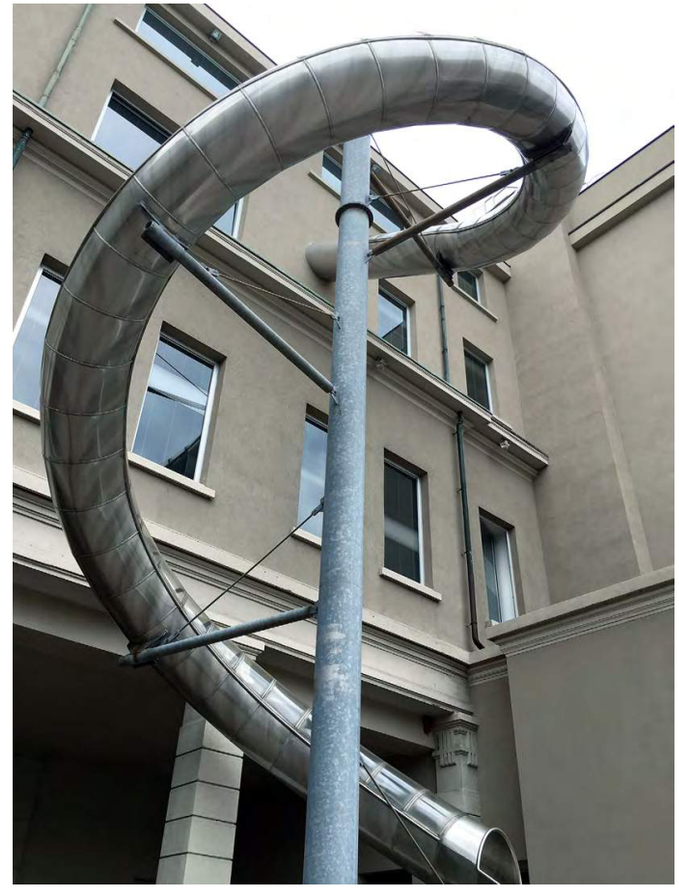
Which is why we drafted in a few friends to help us explore her world and her work, and listen to the designer in her own words.

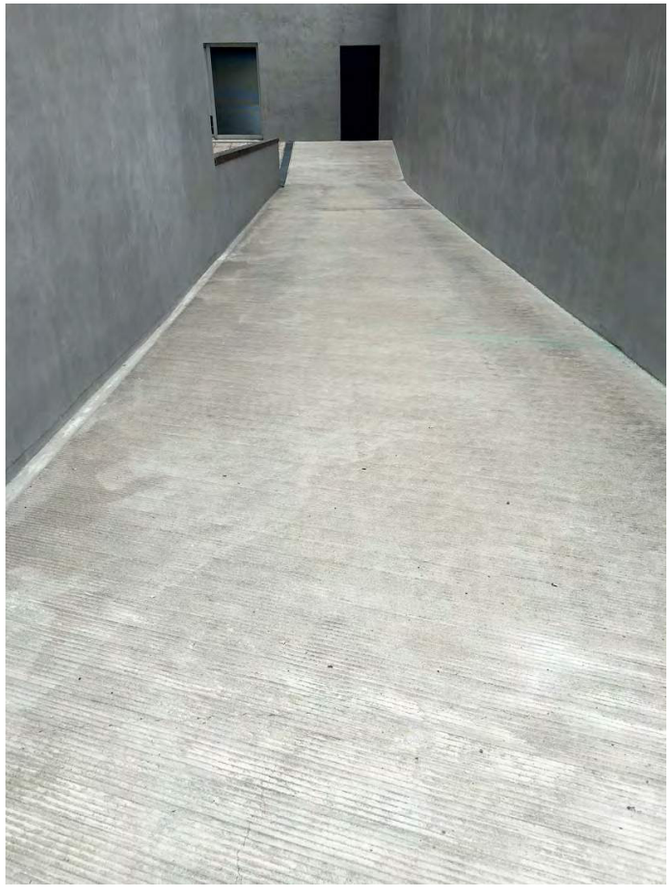
In June, we invited Raf Simons to Milan to chat with her about what it means to be a fashion designer today (back then, Raf only had eyes for his own label, but his subsequent appointment as creative director at US giant Calvin Klein now adds an interesting perspective to their conversation). Then super-stylist Katie Grand interviewed Mrs. Prada about their shared favourite subject – Prada clothes – and shot her own enviable Prada and Miu Miu archives with photographer Norbert Schoerner. Next up, 20-year-old writer, actress and Prada-phile, Tavi Gevinson, quizzed Mrs. Prada about what she means to women (of all ages) and what women mean to her. And finally, we sent photographer Juergen Teller down the Carsten Höller slide in Mrs. Prada’s office in Milan (and he came back with some pictures of her, too).

What comes to the fore over the following pages is simply confirmation of a long-held belief. Beyond seasonal trends or Q4’s financial results, everybody loves Miuccia.

Prada, Milano

Photographs by Juergen Teller





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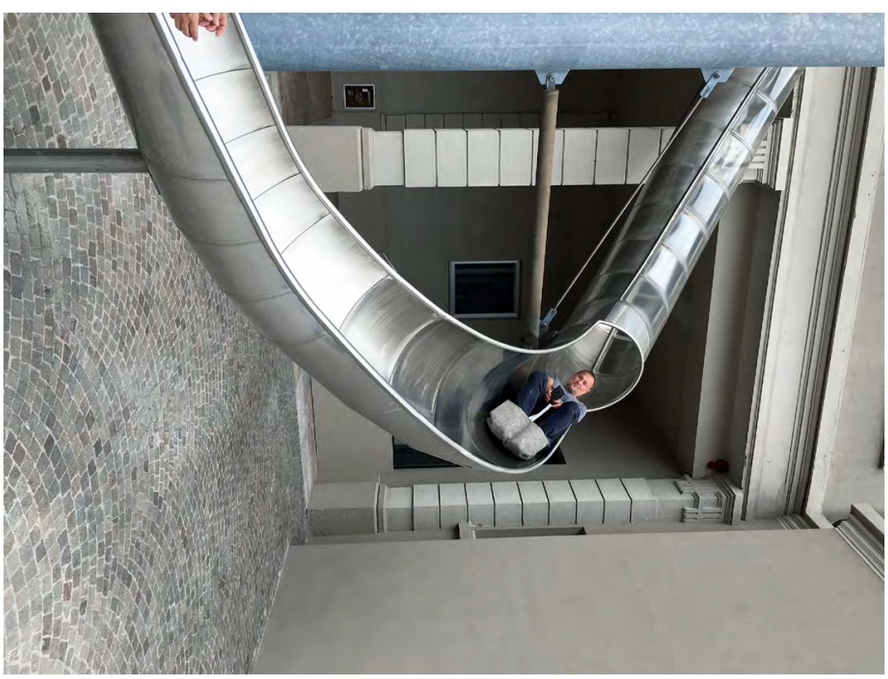


‘Us designers rarely get the chance to be together.’

Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons in conversation.

By Jonathan Wingfield

‘I’m never jealous of the good ones.’

Raf Simons and Miuccia Prada in conversation.

Let's start the interview by discussing interviews. Love them? Loathe them? Necessary evil?
Miuccia Prada: I generally have a problem with doing interviews because the only way I can talk is if I say what I really think, otherwise it's impossible. But sometimes what I think – and therefore what I say in interviews – is not always deemed politically correct.
Raf Simons: That's one of the things I think we should talk about today; I think that designers should be freer to say what we really think. These days, we are no longer able to; we're supposed to always self-censor ourselves. People express such extreme opinions online about our collections, yet if we dare say one thing that is not politically acceptable…
Miuccia Prada: …we are killed!

That doesn't bode very well for this interview!
Miuccia Prada: [Laughs] No, no, it is not the journalist's questions; it is what gets picked up *after* the interview. If in a context like this, I want to touch on a delicate subject, or express who I am, then I can articulate and discuss that and you will understand, but when a single sentence is taken out of this context – removing any irony or anything else – then it becomes another thing altogether.
Raf Simons: The more visible your position, the more you have to be careful. Having my own brand is different from when I was at Dior; people are not so focused on it. But at that time, I felt like there was all this pressure on how to behave and how not to behave, or how to speak. Not that I was given a list of rules; it just automatically happens like that. I found it very complicated, and [because of that] I started to read less and less about fashion, even though I'm usually really interested in what other people have to say.

Do you feel this is the case across the industry?
Raf Simons: I feel that everybody has become very careful – especially designers, and it is the actual designer's point of view that I like to read the most. I am far more interested in what designers have to say than people might think. I can be a big fan of other designers, though I can also really hate the work of other designers, even though I am not supposed to say that. Hate is the wrong word, of course, but there are things you just don't like, which of course, is fine. Personally, I don't care if somebody hates my work; I have no problem with it.

Do you feel it is important for designers to communicate through words – written or spoken?
Miuccia Prada: I think it is my job to speak through the clothes.
Raf Simons: As designers, we choose to work through clothes and fashion shows and photography and everything. But I think we also have something to say. These days, there are so many people judging the fashion world who I don't even know – beyond the people we know and respect, like Suzy Menkes or Tim Blanks – and they often have such extreme things to say that I feel they sometimes position themselves *above* people who have long-term experience. I am somebody who is very into young opinions, young voices, young creativity, but I don't really know who all these people are.

'People express such extreme opinions online about our collections, yet if we dare say one thing that is not politically acceptable, we are totally destroyed!'

Raf Simons: And I find that very problematic.
Miuccia Prada: Me, too. I sense this so much, and I always find myself self-censoring because anything interesting that I want to express no longer seems possible. [As a designer] you don't always have the time to explain what it is you want to say; you might be thinking about a complex conceptual idea but you want to be lighter, what you say might come out like a *boutade*,[1] but that *boutade* becomes the headline – one word becomes your mantra. So you feel you don't have any control over your thoughts, and very often – sometimes in a good way, sometimes bad – there is less possibility to answer. You can't say this, you can't say that, so it is better not to talk. The last interview I did, I took out 80 percent.

Miuccia Prada: It depends on who you listen to: sometimes there are very good comments on the Internet, and then there can be something stupid. When you just have these naked anonymous comments you should be able to say to yourself, 'Who cares?' The tendency should be *not* to read these anymore, but I can't resist being curious.
Raf Simons: Me neither.
Miuccia Prada: It's our job, we have to know what is happening, but it goes beyond that. I think the complexity we are facing is almost worse than for politicians; up until the 1980s and even the 1990s, there was an audience group in fashion that you basically knew. But now you have to work with *everybody*, for better or worse.

Do you like the fact that you're now talking to a wider audience?
Miuccia Prada: I like the idea of sharing my ideas with more people; that's the interesting part, to work outside the small elite that I know. You are obliged to face the truth of different countries, of different people, but at the same time, the sheer quantity of comments – clever or stupid – that comes with a bigger audience is something that doesn't work. The whole world is talking, but there is nothing coming out.
Raf Simons: While I have no problem with negative responses towards me, I do have a problem that I cannot be negative myself.
Miuccia Prada: I completely agree.

Who's telling you not to be negative?
Raf Simons: No one is telling us, but you get punished for it. By the public.
Miuccia Prada: It is so true that through our job we cannot talk, and yet we are the minds behind all this big industry success. Maybe we don't take our job into our own hands enough, and we should do.
Raf Simons: I have said things in the past that got me really punished. Publicly. I felt really upset afterwards and I thought, 'God, man, why do I have to be punished by some anonymous person who writes the ugliest thing about my show? And why am I not allowed to react?' I guess, because when you are a public person you have to just shut up.
Miuccia Prada: As designers I feel that we are always very strongly accused. Why does no one accuse journalists or bloggers? Why do we have to be the only ones under inquisition? I once said to a journalist, 'Listen, you judge us, and although we never say it, we judge you, too'. [Laughs]
Raf Simons: I know that if Miuccia and I were speaking in a closed environment, we would speak in more extreme ways, and about other brands, too, because I know that they are speaking about us. It is not about being good or bad, it is about having an opinion, and I have a very specific opinion about other brands. I mean, right now I could throw two words out onto the table – two brand names – and we could have a discussion about them and if you published it, a bomb will go off! [Laughs]

Do you feel you are able to articulate your opinion about what is happening in fashion through the collections and what it is you do as a brand?
Raf Simons: I think with my and Miuccia's shows they are clearly a reaction to specific things that we see. What I saw onstage yesterday [at Prada's Autumn/Winter 2016/17 menswear show] was a very clear reaction.

Does the self-censorship you've both mentioned impact the way you design?
Miuccia Prada: No, not at all. I feel that in my job as a designer I have complete freedom.
Raf Simons: Yes, me too. I feel free with the collections. More and more. You just let it all out there, in the collection…
Miuccia Prada: On the subject of self-censorship, I feel like we should create a small group in which we can be free to talk, because I cannot stand it anymore. Because without that freedom to talk, the mind does not progress; if you cannot say bad things – or things that might be considered politically incorrect – how can you even hold a discussion? Being politically correct doesn't allow you to be objective.

I presume it's the dissemination of information now that's at the root of these issues? I mean, you might have said something 20 years ago and it would have been contained in a magazine or a radio interview. But now you'll say something and 20 minutes later, it is all over the world.
Miuccia Prada: I don't know if it is just the fact it is so spread out. We probably have to be so politically correct because our business has become bigger; if you are small you can say what you like – whether that's something super smart or avant-garde or just stupid – and nothing will happen. But if you are a big brand or part of a big group, it automatically becomes more moralistic. And in general, people are becoming increasingly conservative; and so the more superficial and the more generic that you come across as, the less you are criticized. This censorship has a negative effect and is a very serious thing.
Raf Simons: I think Miuccia's suggestion of discussing these things in a kind of closed group is very interesting. It is important to know that there are other people who are of the same mindset as me, and share the same opinions; to know that I could talk to them about these things is very satisfying. The simple fact that I know Miuccia and a few others are out there is almost enough.

'I could throw two words onto the table – two brand names – and we could have a discussion about them, and if you published it, a bomb would go off!'

Miuccia Prada: I would love to create that group of people – the ones who respect each other – where we can say what we want. And the group should make a designers' declaration; that would be so fun and so interesting and so honest! But the difficult part would be how to share those ideas and thoughts with others afterwards.
Raf Simons: Just doing that would already make us appear pretentious.
Miuccia Prada: Can you imagine? [Laughs] It would be impossible!

Raf, you've mentioned your interest in other designers, interacting with them, exchanging thoughts, and so on. Why did you want to do this conversation with Mrs. Prada?
Raf Simons: Beyond the small group of people around me – my assistants, my friends, my family – I really feel a lack of dialogue with people I have something seriously in common with. I mean, I don't think I can relate to absolutely *everybody*, but I was starting to feel very isolated in this world. When he had this LVMH Prize[2] about two years ago, everybody came to Paris the night before it started, so Marc, Phoebe and I had dinner together at Marc's house, which was such an eye-opener for me. And for them as well, I think.
Miuccia Prada: Because you were free to talk?
Raf Simons: Yes. It really set my mind in a different way. The three of us reflecting on things 20 years ago, 10 years ago, and how we feel about the future; it wasn't the kind of conversation I was expecting to have, but everyone felt free. That is, of course, not something that you can do with everyone; you need to have mutual respect.

How do you regard the sense of competition among designers?
Raf Simons: There is obviously competition, but there is also respect. I think we are all competitive, and that is a good thing. I mean, I feel competitive towards Miuccia, and she with me…
Miuccia Prada: Of course.
Raf Simons: But that is a healthy competition, which I think we should always maintain, but then I am also really curious to share experiences, emotions…
Miuccia Prada: Yes, if you have mutual respect. I'm always saying, 'I'm never jealous of the good ones'. What drives me crazy is when people are successful and I don't respect them. Or when they are tricky and pretend not to be.
Raf Simons: There's lots of them.
Miuccia Prada: Many.

I get the feeling you're both wary of the fact that this industry has become just that – an industry. And with that comes so many more brands, more consumers, more magazines, more opinions, and a greater scale of operations…
Miuccia Prada: I think there's something slightly wrong about this idea of big brands. Raf did the biggest thing by leaving [Dior] – *chapeau*, respect – because he probably didn't feel comfortable anymore. Of course, Prada is my own company, so it's my own fault that it is the size it is, but now I'm at a moment where I really want to focus on what I like, what I care about. I don't have to care if we don't grow enough for the market. Whatever, who cares, I really want Prada to stay in a context that I like. Because we grow, grow, grow and suddenly you start to lose control, and there's something wrong with that, now I think we stopped that.

Is there a moment in fashion when you think structurally a big house becomes too big?
Raf Simons: I think the problem right now is that there is all this freedom in the actual garments and the performance on stage and whatever, but there is no more freedom in the structure [of a house]. Most of us Belgians have remained small and independent, but for many, structure has evolved into this kind of massive octopus where there is no more freedom; the structure itself has becomes too dominant and too defining.

'Prada is my own company, so it's my own fault that it's the size it is. But I don't have to care if we don't grow enough for the market. Whatever, who cares.'

Can you give me an example of how that manifests itself?
Raf Simons: Part of it is this idea of keeping the audience happy, with the events and the dinners and the presents and the advertising systems. Sometimes I think I would like to make it simpler, but more exciting…
Miuccia Prada: …and also more fun. I totally agree with him. One thing that I would really love to do is to work with Raf, and maybe with other people – it would be so much fun. If I could do a show with him, imagine how much fun we would have.

What is stopping you?
Miuccia Prada: Nothing, I think it is an experiment that could really be done.
Raf Simons: Maybe structure might be stopping that. Even my own Raf Simons brand – compared to a big power brand like Dior – is still structured. That gives possibilities, but it also gives a lot of non-possibilities. For me, I would be excited if Miuccia would do the Raf Simons brand for a season, and then I would do a season for Marc Jacobs in New York, and Marc would do Prada; I think the audience would be totally excited by that.
Miuccia Prada: Ah, completely!
Raf Simons: Maybe fashion should operate more like a museum, where you have a museum curator, but you have *guest* curators come in, too. I think that the fashion business has recently stopped exploring its own possibilities; it should become much more liberated once again.
Miuccia Prada: I totally agree. I really think that's true.
Raf Simons: But it is up to the big voices to make that kind of decision themselves, because fashion is not a system that sits around wanting that. If Miuccia or Marc Jacobs say, 'I am going to let this person do my brand for a season, and then I am going there for a season', *then* others will follow. But it won't happen until then.
Miuccia Prada: Yes, and I am thinking more and more about exactly this kind of idea, because it feels like it is *needed* – not just to get the world talking, but to broaden the horizons of what fashion can be, and also to have fun. What I mainly think is that you have fun when you really do good stuff, and that fun comes with other people.
Raf Simons: But the structure itself within today's fashion business doesn't always allow for that kind of idea. You know, typically within the creative structure there is the creative director, then the right-hand, and the other internal designers. Other structures might not be compatible. A couple of years ago I did a collection together with the American artist Sterling Ruby[3] – he is a close friend who I trust very much, which is why I said, 'Let's do a collection together, but let's do it all the way'. His voice was as present as mine, which is not usually the case. When you are in your own structure – even if you have a right hand – my voice or Miuccia's voice remains the biggest. But when I invited Sterling, our voices were equal, the label had the two names on it, and it was a real eye opener, because I had to step back.
Miuccia Prada: Did that make you feel uncomfortable?
Raf Simons: For a moment, but not personally, because I love him and collaborating together was easy. But in terms of what Sterling brought, it was something that I would not have come up with alone. I kept thinking the collection had to be more special and he kept saying, 'No, it has to be a normal shirt, and a normal pair of jeans, nothing more, not a special cut or design'. And at the end, when it all came together, I was like, 'Man, you were right'. Sometimes you just need this different eye and different mindset to break out from your own systematic behaviour.

'Could you imagine if, one season, Miuccia did the Raf Simons brand, then I'd go do Marc Jacobs, and Marc would come and do Prada? It'd be so exciting!'

Do you think that fashion is losing its sense of fearlessness?
Miuccia Prada: No, I think that still exists in our work, because many designers are quite risky in what they do now. Perhaps we do things that are *too* strange, and sometimes I think to myself, 'Is this the right thing to do?' – because there is that fine line between pure art and fashion. I've always wanted to make clothes that people wear, otherwise I'd change my job and become an artist. I am a fashion designer and I do a commercial job, but at the same time we want to be creative and we always want to push limits. Also there is this entertainment aspect: people just want to be excited. For instance, if Raf did the next Prada show instead of me, the whole world would be going 'Wow!' But maybe that's *all* they would talk about. So you have to be careful that the choices you make are not influenced by this increasing need for entertainment.

Do you feel that fearlessness becomes harder to exercise the bigger you get?
Miuccia Prada: I decided to become bigger, and I like the idea of sharing my ideas with more people, but at some point you lose control of what happens after your show. It's a very interesting moment right now in fashion, because Raf is right, maybe we should have more courage. He certainly did.
Raf Simons: It does feel like that to me. The whole thing about leaving Dior was not that easy, but I found there was a difference between being a creative director and having your own brand. I am one of the few people who has done both. You have people who are creative directors – they are born creative directors, like Ghesquière, Slimane – who do not know what it is to have their own brand. And then there are the others who only have their own brands, and then there are people who do both.

And it is really day and night, I think. The responsibility, the emotion…

Miuccia Prada: Do you have any preference between the two?

Raf Simons: No, I like both. When you have your own brand it is something that you build, it is like your own baby. And when you are a creative director, you also treat it like a baby, but it is not *your* baby.

Ironically, it was Mrs. Prada and Mr. Bertelli who first gave you that opportunity to work for another brand, Jil Sander.[4]

Raf Simons: Yes, that was a big thing for me; I hadn't even done womenswear at that point, so I was scared. I was also thinking it would be a long-term thing – in the end it was seven years. Dior was short in comparison, only three-and-a-half years. Going in to these brands, I realized you cannot possibly know what it is like until you are there, being creative director – you just don't know. And as much as there was incredible beauty in that house [Dior], and incredible people and ateliers and everything, I just felt like, 'This isn't for me, I am not the right person for them'. That was very, very complicated.

Miuccia Prada: Do you feel stronger now than you did a year ago?

Raf Simons: No, not necessarily; just the same. It is not something that I see as such a big thing, this whole idea of leaving Dior. I know lots of people were like, 'Oh my God, you left Dior', but I don't see it like that. There was no fight, there was no conflict; it was just a conclusion that I made quite quickly. I don't know if it is because I am Belgian – because we can be very demanding, I think, regarding what we want and how we see things in terms of our creative input – but I didn't want to force my thing onto Dior either. I just came to the conclusion that this is where I stand, and this is what I will have to deal with if I sign up for the long term; and it is not how I want it, it's not how I see things. I have my thoughts about what I think Dior could become over time, and they have their ideas of what it *will* become. I wish them the best with it, but it just wasn't my thing in the long run.

Mrs. Prada, what was your feeling when you first heard that Raf was going to leave?

Miuccia Prada: I thought he did something very honest and brave. But I agree, I am sure he sees it as something much less dramatic than how it was viewed from the outside.

Raf Simons: The whole of the fashion world sees these things as like [feigning shock], 'You cannot leave LVMH; you cannot leave Dior'. But when it comes to things like that I feel that you have to put each other on the same team, on the same level, and I am sure it wasn't easy for them. Sometimes I hate the whole spectacle that surrounds the fashion world.

Miuccia Prada: Yes, too much attention.

You mean the hysteria?

Raf Simons: Yes, when people go into a new position or leave a position there is so much spectacle; the system pumps it up, and very often the brand pumps it up, too. I've always thought, 'Just give me a little bit of time'. I started back in the days when everything was quite calm. When I started my brand it took years before people took any serious notice.

Miuccia Prada: Now everything is so public, everything becomes a big deal, and that is wrong and not necessary.

Raf Simons: It creates unnecessary pressure.

Since leaving Dior, do you feel now that you have regained a sense of ownership because the work you're currently doing has your name on it? And is that ownership and responsibility important to you?

Raf Simons: It *is* important to me, absolutely. But my own brand structure has always been pretty small, and I think that's why subconsciously I also took on these big structure jobs – to kind of feel that distinction in scale. Now, after two decades, I've started to realize that I am not so unhappy with my own thing being small in scale. Of course, there is very little economic possibility, but with very little you can still do things that are crucial to a certain number of people, and those people react in ways that is really satisfying.

Miuccia Prada: It is absolutely time to rethink these systems and structures that have come to define us.

Raf Simons: Yes, I do think that there is something that we have to rethink. You know, there are a lot of people in charge right now who are not creative, and that is new.

Prada seems to remain an exception. Can I ask you Raf, what is it you admire about Prada?

'People like Ghesquière and Slimane are born creative directors, but they don't know what it is to have their own brand. It is day and night, I think.'

Miuccia Prada: No, no, no, I don't want to hear this. I am sure we respect each other, *punto*!

Raf Simons: That is easy for me to explain: on all levels, I can sense Miuccia's very clear vision, her mindset, her view of the world, her view of art, her political opinions. And as one person she is able to construct and share that on such a huge scale. I find that mind-blowing.

How important is that when it comes to appreciating fashion design– actual garments?

Raf Simons: The reason I wear Prada is not just because I like the clothes; it's also because Miuccia has a mindset that I can relate to. You know, there are all these brands in the world today making so many beautiful things – because everybody knows how to make clothes and design patterns and make things look beautiful – but I don't want all that shit if the mindset is not what I can relate to. So even if a brand has a beautiful coat, if the person who designed it is not the kind of person I can relate to in terms of vision or opinion or culture, then I just don't want to wear it. And I think that is different from lots of people.

You think for most people garments eclipse meaning?

Raf Simons: I think lots of people just *grab* whatever they can, simply because it is beautiful. And I think that is where fashion became a very different thing in the last decade. You take a bag from this brand, shoes from that one, a coat from another. When I was growing up, I always liked the fact that in fashion there was this idea of the Margiela woman, or the Dries Van Noten woman, or the Yohji Yamamoto woman or the Helmut Lang woman, or the Prada woman, or Prada man. It was based on mindset and culture. And because I think that the mindset that Prada has is extreme, I am very impressed that it could be scaled up to become this kind of institution. I am a big mess of course, because I have a similarly extreme mindset and yet I am still sitting here with a small brand!

Miuccia Prada: It doesn't matter. You can have a small brand or a big brand, but the influence you have can be huge, in either case.

Do you recognize what Raf is saying about the clothes needing a mindset?

Miuccia Prada: Yes, I agree. You look at something and think it is a beautiful, but who cares about clothes if the mindset doesn't correspond to you. Also, without sounding pretentious, I think that while people like us are very demanding, or sophisticated, or whatever you want to say, I think this sense of criticism is quite rare. Most people tend to have such a superficial opinion of things.

Raf Simons: The other outstanding thing about Miuccia is that she is a true pioneer, and there are very few pioneers in the fashion world. There are a *lot* of followers in fashion, as there always has been. In the 1950s and 1960s it was the same. Now I sometimes think that fashion no longer has a memory.

Miuccia Prada: Oh, yes, yes, completely! These days, the last person to have done something, is the one who owns it. Memory in fashion doesn't even last six months.

Why do you think that is?

Miuccia Prada: People get too much information, too much of everything.

Raf Simons: When you are a more-established fashion brand, you are not supposed to say things about new people coming through, because then you are thought to be complaining. But I think it is clear enough to everyone what is new and what is not new, what is a copy; what makes sense and what doesn't make sense.

How hard is it to continue finding original ideas? Is originality absolutely fundamental to what you do?

Miuccia Prada: I like the idea of doing something that is new, that is for sure. At least I tend towards that. But it sometimes feels like everything has been done, so today it is sometimes more about context and how you choose to put things together. For instance, you can work on something that is pop, and why women like bows, hearts, pink, and so on, and so the collection plays on that sense of obviousness.

Do you like the idea that you are sometimes referencing yourself in your own archives?

Miuccia Prada: I prefer not to, although I sometimes decide to do it. And anyway I have to say one thing about Raf: sometimes I think I've had a fantastic idea, and Olivier,[5] who works with me and Fabio[6] on shows and knows Raf's work so well, says to me, 'Miuccia, Raf already did that before'. [Laughs]

'I think that Prada's mindset is quite extreme, so I am very impressed that it could be scaled up to become this kind of institution.'

Raf, earlier you made reference to your Belgian-ness, and I was interested to know how relevant or important you think your respective origins are in the context of fashion design?
Raf Simons: Belgians have no real history when it comes to clothing or designing or manufacturing, so in that sense I think it was quite weird that suddenly there was Belgian fashion, with Martin Margiela, Dries Van Noten, Ann Demeulemeester...[7] And I think it was important not to compare Belgian fashion to Paris or Italy – with no production possibilities, no factories in its history.
Miuccia Prada: Maybe that is why it is interesting.
Raf Simons: I think so, yes. And since there was no history, everybody was feeling the desire to do their thing, but were shy about the exposure they might get. We feel small because we are a small country, but then deep inside a lot can happen when you feel small. That is a psychological thing, so I could feel from that generation that there was so much they wanted to let out, but they were shy and reluctant. I find that in fashion the people who scream the loudest very often have the least to say. Anyway, I think that my generation, which is the following generation, definitely carried the same weight of not really being supported by the country, because there is no system.
Miuccia Prada: It was very relevant for fashion, that different approach, fashion changed after that.
Raf Simons: With the other countries, Italy, America, France, there was a ground and a fashion structure to build from. And I think that a designer like Martin Margiela had a problem thinking about structure during his whole career. He was not structured, he was a creative person, and had he not had his business partner, Jenny Meirens,[8] maybe we would never have even heard about him. I think that's the case for quite a few of us.

Mrs. Prada, as time goes by, do you feel you have a greater ambivalence or a greater fondness for your Italian-ness?
Miuccia Prada: The way I was brought up was never really Italian. I mean, I'm deeply rooted in Italy, but that was never at the top of my thinking. I just wanted to be in the world, so I never felt this Italian-ness, even though I maybe am so Italian. But last year I kind of decided to be more patriotic….
Raf Simons: Could you see yourself working in another country?
Miuccia Prada: No, I live here. I am very happy and proud of the fact that I live in the home where I was born, and the place where I started to become political is right next door – all my history is here. That grounds me and gives me strength, as do my friends.
Raf Simons: But do you think that your work would look different if you were to design it on a completely different continent?
Miuccia Prada: I have no idea… I don't think so. But who knows?

Another question for you both: an auctioneer in Paris recently told me, 'Fashion no longer has prestige'. It was a comment that's really stuck with me. I wanted to get your thoughts on this.
Raf Simons: I think the opposite.
Miuccia Prada: Me, too. More and more. I have to say, when I was starting this job, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it felt like it was the worst possible moment to be a fashion designer. This was the feminist revolution and I was leftist,[9] working for the [Communist] Party, yet I loved fashion and that prevailed. But there was a real sense of shame for me to be working in fashion because it felt too superficial. And then, maybe 10 years ago, I noticed so much appreciation from intellectuals, artists, architects and so on. They really respect fashion now, they enjoy my position, and seeing what I can do for them with my Fondazione. I think it is curious how what I learned through fashion has had so much influence on the Fondazione, because fashion is very free – at least in our minds – and I think that one of my challenges now is to demonstrate how my job as a fashion designer can help improve my work in the Fondazione. So I totally disagree that fashion has lost its prestige.
Raf Simons: I agree completely with Miuccia; I think it is extremely prestigious. In my opinion, the only problem with fashion is that it's become pop.
Miuccia Prada: Completely, like music.
Raf Simons: I didn't study fashion,[10] but for the kids from my generation who studied fashion in the 1980s, there was a slight feeling of shame about it. Parents would say, 'Oh God, our kid's into fashion, why can't he be a painter or something?' Whereas these days, I get the impression that all parents want their kids to be in fashion! Because it's become very popular and mainstream

'Sometimes, I'll think I've had a fantastic idea, but Olivier Rizzo, who works with me and knows Raf's work, says, 'Miuccia, Raf's already done that.''

and there is big prestige and there are big-money jobs, and everybody wants to be in that world. So I think it is very wrong what he says. It is not elitist anymore, maybe, but that is something different. I've said this before: I don't think we should feel ashamed that fashion was once elitist, and not for everyone. I don't think it was wrong. But I also don't think it is wrong that now it *is* supposed to be for everybody.

We are clearly in a period of huge democratization in fashion and many other fields. Do you think that elitism has value within that?
Miuccia Prada: It is a difficult question to answer. Elitism is already by definition not such a great word. Elitism is like the word luxury; they are really bad words. But if elitism means studying, searching, reading, discussing, then it is a good word.

Are the words elitism and luxury bad because you find them inherently contentious?
Miuccia Prada: When people ask me about the word luxury, I refuse to answer them because I hate that word and anyone who talks about it, whether it's a person saying luxury is a big diamond or someone else saying luxury is walking in the countryside. Personally, I think any answer is wrong when you're talking about luxury. Elite is an equally bad word if it just represents somebody who thinks they are better than another person. Then, it is obviously wrong. But if it represents something of actual worth, then it can be something good. So I don't know how to answer.
Raf Simons: There is definitely a fashion hierarchy and that is connected to the idea of elite. Everybody can buy a ticket to go to a rock concert, but in fashion it is still the fashion people – the designers, the houses – who decide who can and cannot come and see their show. If it is right or wrong, I don't really know, but I would like to explore how it could function in a different way. I mean, I did my last show without *any* seating; people just stood and watched.
Miuccia Prada: Yes, everybody wants to be first row. I say, 'Listen, the world is not democratic! Designers are judged every single season – that one's the best, that's the worst, that's second best, third, fourth – so don't pretend this is a democracy'. To do a show, like Raf has, without seating seems like a much better idea.
Raf Simons: Although I was scared that people would complain, 'Ah, we have to stand so long'. Because, you know, people are often complaining.
Miuccia Prada: With yesterday's show, the first row actually had the worst view; the view from the higher up rows was better! But try explaining that the fourth row is better than the first row; of course, they would prefer to sit in the front row and see less. But you see how every little thing that you say could offend somebody.
Raf Simons: We keep on coming back to what we dare and don't dare say! I mean, I think that I am quite a daring person but…
Miuccia Prada: …not suicidal!

Mrs. Prada, you mentioned before the importance of the work you do for Prada fashion and how you are able to bring that into your art foundation. But I was wondering, what are the other metrics of success for you? How do you equate success personally?
Miuccia Prada: Let's just say I am happy that a collection is successful when I feel it from the audience, or when I read comments. But after that I am very sad sometimes because I really don't enjoy the idea of success, I never have done. I am happy if it is not a disaster, but the idea of success has never really given me happiness. I don't know what would happen if my career was a disaster…

Is the day after the show – like we are today – a big comedown, a kind of hangover?
Miuccia Prada: I don't have the time to think about that. Today I have this interview, and then over the next 10 days, I have to work on the new Miu Miu collection, to invent a whole new world! Maybe we'll get Raf to do it!

Does that pressure to invent new worlds motivate you or make you anxious?
Miuccia Prada: Well, right now, we're in a very anxious and intense moment in general about what is happening around us, with Brexit and the Trump vote coming up. It is a very difficult and daring moment and so I am always thinking, thinking, thinking about everything in relation to my job. In that sense, it is good. But that doesn't leave a lot of time for relaxation.

It is rare that writers or musicians or architects exist within systems that

'Everybody wants to be on the front row, but listen, designers are judged every season – he's best, she's worst – so don't pretend this is a democracy.'

require them to create something entirely new every six months, or less.
Raf Simons: They have their own systems. And, as fashion designers, we still have a choice. Miuccia could say tomorrow, 'I will do one collection a year and show it whenever I want', and *everyone* would be there. But while that might please Miuccia, does that please the turnover of her company? It is as simple as that. With my personal brand I am doing two shows a year, but I could also decide to only do a single show every three years. To please myself I could do that, but I also know what that would mean economically. In the art world, though, there are people who actually do that: Robert Gober[11] doesn't really produce much work; when he is ready he'll just call [his gallerist] Matthew Marks.[12] But there are now a lot of young artists following a system: they produce work for every art fair, every event, and there is an agenda for each show. But by doing that, then everything becomes too similar. The weird thing is that as a designer or an artist, you are always confronted with your own sense of will; it is about what *you* want and what you *don't* want, whether you allow yourself or not to do these things. And that is the most difficult thing, I think. When Miuccia speaks about her dissatisfaction, that is something I recognize very much. While sometimes I might pretend to be very satisfied, in a way, I always feel restless.

Creatively speaking, when are you happiest?
Raf Simons: In the creative environment I think I am most at peace when it is just a normal working day, in-house.
Miuccia Prada: That is the moment I enjoy the most, too: when I can finally work without distraction, because there is almost always something that is involving other people. But the day when there is nothing to do except just work is like, 'Ahhhhh'. It's so relaxing.

How often is that?
Miuccia Prada: Not so often, but the pleasure of working without other distractions, those are beautiful days for me.

When and where are you able to be most creative and productive?
Miuccia Prada: I've discovered that when I am in bed – in the early morning when I am still a little bit asleep – is when I can concentrate on what really matters for me. And that helps, because I'll arrive at work with a clearer idea. I should say that with my small group of people here, we work *really* last minute, increasingly so. And I accept that it is my fault.

Really, why?
Miuccia Prada: I don't know. There is so much to do: collections, campaigns, there is never a quiet moment. This last men's show we did in less than 15 days.
Raf Simons: You see that everywhere now, within the big structures. For my own brand, we start the collection three months before the show; otherwise it wouldn't be possible, because our structure is too small. Even at Dior, with the couture, we had to start on time.
Miuccia Prada: We have the most fantastic people here, who work miracles and are very generous with their time, because they often finish so late. I feel *coupable* because I shouldn't take such advantage of their skills, but the quality of the people and the production is amazing.

Does this quality of production allow you the freedom to spend more time experimenting on the designs?
Miuccia Prada: Yes, and that is my fault. When I start working on a collection, I will say, 'Ah, this is nice, that is nice, this is nice', I like everything. But once the models come to the fittings, I'm more like, 'This is shit, this is shit, this is shit', and so it is only at the last moment that I really know what I want. Sometimes, I just find myself pretending to like something…
Raf Simons: We are very different, I think. Once I have the idea, usually three months before the show, it won't change: the way I see it then stays exactly the same until the end. Nothing changes. I think this is because I am always used to working by myself. I don't work in the evolved fashion system, with consultants and stylists and all those people together on the creative side, except for my own creative right-hand, who is in the company permanently with me. Sometimes I think maybe I should work with more people because putting the whole show together by myself is really stressful.

Is that stress useful though, required even?
Raf Simons: Well, going back to what Miuccia said about dissatisfaction, these days I've started to hate the actual day of the show – no, not actually *hate*, I should avoid using that word [laughs] – but I no longer find it in any way pleasant. I don't know why, but I see myself becoming an idiot that day. I see mistakes and then I am not gentle enough about expressing them to people. Then there is all the press afterwards, and everyone wants the same thing at the same time. I just feel very helpless and I sometimes wish we could skip the show day entirely, but, you know, it's *the* moment that many people have been waiting for. The following day can be very difficult for me, too. This season, I slept until five o'clock in the afternoon.
Miuccia Prada: You know when I am happy? When, in my head, I know that I've got a clear concept of the show. After that, I can leave it to others, because for me that is when it is done and I am finished. The reality, of course, is that I work after that moment, and I also realize that the translation of this idea into reality – from a concept into producing garments – is what is difficult, and where you learn a lot about your actual working process. Even if I might pretend that the production part is less necessary, it is of course very necessary, in order to improve my overall thinking.

Are you articulating the concept in your mind right up to the last minute?
Miuccia Prada: Yes, and I don't know if that is because I like to work under stress or because I become more difficult the nearer we get to the show. So I'll typically start with maybe four or five ideas and then one will prevail; we don't always have the time to make the other ideas into toiles, so you think, 'OK, we'll maybe use those another time'. Working in a hurry you have to produce more, but there have also been some shows where the refining of the idea was so precise that at the end you have more or less what you need. I know people who do, for instance, 2,000 pieces; they mount earlier and then they select, do the styling, and so on. I don't work like that, I work out of precision and reducing, reducing, reducing.

Do you prefer chaos or calm? Or do you need a little bit of both? Because Raf, you said that the chaos stresses you out…
Raf Simons: I am not a chaotic person. I just can't do that. I can be a mess, but you know what I mean, I am not that kind of person. I am organized, which I think is very Belgian.

Is organization one of your attributes, Mrs. Prada?
Miuccia Prada: I don't know. I really don't know! The result is what counts.
Raf Simons: I am only interested if what you make is sublime. If that comes out of chaos or organization, who cares? I was fascinated by the question you asked Miuccia about when you're at your most creative. For me, this comes late at night, when I should be falling asleep, when I don't really want it to, when I don't have a notebook or anything to draw with. Like you say, Miuccia, it comes like an automatism, and you immediately react. I definitely couldn't just sit down at a desk each day for three weeks and start thinking about it.
Miuccia Prada: I know when we are getting good ideas because I find myself smiling, laughing. Until then, if I am not smiling it means I haven't done anything good.

Do you think the people who work closely with you sense that, too?
Miuccia Prada: I think so. It is a communal work, and we all know when there is something good going on.
Raf Simons: I demand from the people around me that they tell me if it is good or bad. I'd hate to be with people who say it is good all the time.
Miuccia Prada: That is one of the reasons why I like to work with Fabio so much, because most of the time he tells me what is wrong, and that is so necessary.

You've talked today about self-censorship of your words. How acute is your own sense of self-editing, of quality control in your designs or ideas?
Miuccia Prada: Ideas can be so pure when you do the fashion show, but my job forces me to see the bad things – 'This doesn't work; this isn't selling'. It forces you to see the reality, and to understand what people like, even when that isn't always what you like yourself. That is the most relevant point in my work: always to face reality. When it is good that is fine – it doesn't make my life better – but I only care about what doesn't work. Because you have so much to do that you don't have time to enjoy what is working. You have to take care of what doesn't.

Are you able in your own mind to think, 'I'm sure this is what I should be doing?' And then are you confident

'Miuccia could say tomorrow, 'I'm only going to do one collection a year and show it whenever I want.' But does that please the turnover of her company?'

'I am deeply human, even if sometimes I'm nasty with the people around me. You have to be nasty at some point in order to achieve things for everybody.'

that the people you are working with will absolutely see that?
Raf Simons: Yes. And I think if I didn't feel that coming naturally anymore then I would step out [of fashion] in a split second.
Miuccia Prada: I agree.
Raf Simons: I could not live with the self-realization of experiencing that. I am too proud for that. I see what is happening in fashion, and you have to be honest with yourself, it is a matter of your own decisions. You see people who used to be *the* most relevant, but who are no longer relevant, and they still go on…
Miuccia Prada: It depends how you see it. Maybe the actual working is more relevant than the being on top. Armani, he likes to work – it is his company, his job – so why should he stop? As a woman I want to work until late in life. But who knows? Maybe one day I will get fed up, I'll step down, and then it will stop. I don't know exactly. But for sure I like to work.

What percentage of your life would you say you give to fashion?
Miuccia Prada: A lot.
Raf Simons: Personally, I could step out from this now.
Miuccia Prada: Because you are a man, maybe. Being a woman, perhaps if you don't work you start thinking about aging and all that stuff. Maybe you become a mother and are happy to stop, I don't know. But between the job and the Fondazione, it is such a big deal for me; I think that sometimes they are a relief from life, because sometimes life can be so tough.

Do you find escapism in the work?
Miuccia Prada: A bit, yes. The fact that you have to go to work is distracting.

Do you see it as going to work?
Raf Simons: Even if it is demanding, it is a nest that you have created for yourself, a very safe environment. You can always go there and be with people you have a nice time with, and that you like…
Miuccia Prada: …and that those people like you.

What are your feelings about the tension between isolation and unity? Do you feel it is important, as the industry grows ever bigger, that you don't retreat into isolation?
Raf Simons: Yes, definitely. I had been in the game for about a decade or so when I realized that designers do not talk with each other. Maybe it is because I come from such a small-scale design environment. Antwerp is like a village, so you would bump into Ann Demeulemeester or Dries or Walter [Van Beirendonck] at the bakery or in a nightclub, and you would just have a dialogue.
Miuccia Prada: You know what, maybe artists and architects are forced to stay away more from one another, because they are always taking part in the same competitions or shows. I am sure they are jealous of each other.
Raf Simons: Every field has its own rules of competition.
Miuccia Prada: But any time I am with other designers – mainly the ones that I respect, but also others to whom I am maybe indifferent – I always have a good relationship, with nearly everyone, and it is very nice. And we don't have the occasion to be so near, because in the art world they go to the same openings, maybe they do group shows; they are forced to be together because they have the occasions. Us designers don't really have the occasion to be together…
Raf Simons: The need to have this dialogue has increased over the past couple of years, as our system has become more fucked up, and I see everybody in a situation where they seem to be more isolated.

In what ways do you feel the system has become fucked up?
Raf Simons: I might get punished for saying this, but when you are creative director in a big group I feel you get pampered to the extent of becoming isolated. We've talked a bit about hierarchy today. Sure, there should be structure, but not hierarchy, and definitely not a human hierarchy. There were people at Dior who didn't dare talk to me! That is not normal. That is something I find unhealthy. It is like the king-on-the-throne kind of situation.

It feels, Mrs. Prada, that although the scale of your company has grown, there remains a distinct feeling of humanity. I think that is what defines it.
Miuccia Prada: This is really what I care about most, about human feeling and existence. I am more and more interested in people's lives: moments, fears, passions. Someone once told me, 'I don't want to make interesting things, I want my life to be interesting', and I've kept that in mind, as it was a very clever person who told me.

'Sometimes my husband comes home and says, 'Let's not speak about work.' But friends, family, love, work, problems, traumas, death – it's all one.'

That's quite post-materialistic.
Miuccia Prada: It's really what I'm interested in and clothes are at the service of your life. Ultimately, it's your life, and the lives of others, that counts. Even if people don't know it, I am deeply human, even if sometimes I'm nasty to people around me. You have to become nasty at some point because you have to achieve things for everybody, but really I'm not nasty at all. If I could spend my days being more generous with people, listening to their problems and so on, I would love that much more. But at some point you have to lead, you know.

It's that corporate world cliché where it's lonely at the top, and you can't share your time with that many people.
Miuccia Prada: The thing that I would love most would be to be seated in a bar with friends, from morning to night! That is what I love: to be with people. It probably doesn't look like that, but even last night I was with my friends and the people who were working at the bar and so on, having finally finished the show. It was a moment with people. I was like that when I was young and in politics. That is what I liked; I like to be with people and to talk.

Raf has spoken before about compartmentalizing his life – there's the work, and then there's the life and the family, and love – is that something that you do too, or do you think that the two merge?
Miuccia Prada: [Pauses] I think that at the end they merge… they merge. When I started to work with artists and the Fondazione, I didn't want people thinking I was taking advantage of art, so I kept them separate, even if in my mind it is not separate at all. As much as you might want to keep separation, your life and your thoughts are one. Sometimes my husband comes home and says, 'Let's not speak about work, OK?' But your life is one: friends, family, love, work, problems, traumas, death, it is all one. And that is life, basically.

Thank you both very much for your time.
Miuccia Prada: I am tired; this was really intense. Thank you, Raf, for coming.
Raf Simons: No, I thank you.
Miuccia Prada: OK, now I need to go to the bar!

1. Originally a French word meaning to 'burst forth', boutade is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as 'an outbreak or burst especially of temper' and 'an 18th century French dance of impromptu character'. The *Nouveau Dictionnaire François* [sic], written by Pierre Richelet in 1710, is more expansive: 'It is a figurative dance, that was invented by the famous Bocan, master dancer, under the reign of Louis XIII, which was called boutade, because it begins in a manner that has something of the brusque, gay and alert.'

2. In 2015, Simons was a jury member of the annual LVMH Prize for young designers. The winners were Marques'Almeida. Other jury members were J.W. Anderson, Nicolas Ghesquière, Marc Jacobs, Karl Lagerfeld, Humberto Leon and Carol Lim, Phoebe Philo, Riccardo Tisci, Delphine Arnault, Jean-Paul Claverie, and Pierre-Yves Roussel.

3. Raf Simons invited Sterling Ruby to work together on his Autumn/Winter 2014 menswear collection.

4. Raf Simons was creative director at Jil Sander from 2005 to 2012. Prada bought a 75-percent stake in the German brand in 1999 before selling it to private-equity firm Change Capital Partners in 2006.

5. Olivier Rizzo is a renowned Belgian stylist. He studied at Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, alongside his frequent collaborator, photographer Willy Vanderperre.

6. Fabio Zambernardi first started working with Prada in 1981, and has been design director for Prada and Miu Miu since November 2002.

7. After graduating from Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1980, Marina Yee, Dries Van Noten, Ann Demeulemeester, Dirk Bikkembergs, Walter Van Beirendonck and Dirk Van Saene — or the Antwerp Six — put their designs in a van and drove to London. As the *New York Times* wrote in 2013, the trip 'ended up putting Belgian fashion on the international map'. Martin Margiela is often mistakenly included in the group, but had actually graduated from the Academy the previous year.

8. When Jenny Meirens co-founded Maison Martin Margiela with the designer in 1988 she was running a designer-clothing shop in Brussels, decorated with furniture found in Paris.

9. 'I was a Communist but being left wing was fashionable then. I was no different from thousands of middle-class kids,' Miuccia Prada told the *Independent* in February 2004.

10. Raf Simons studied industrial and furniture design in Genk, the city that, incidentally, is the birthplace of Martin Margiela.

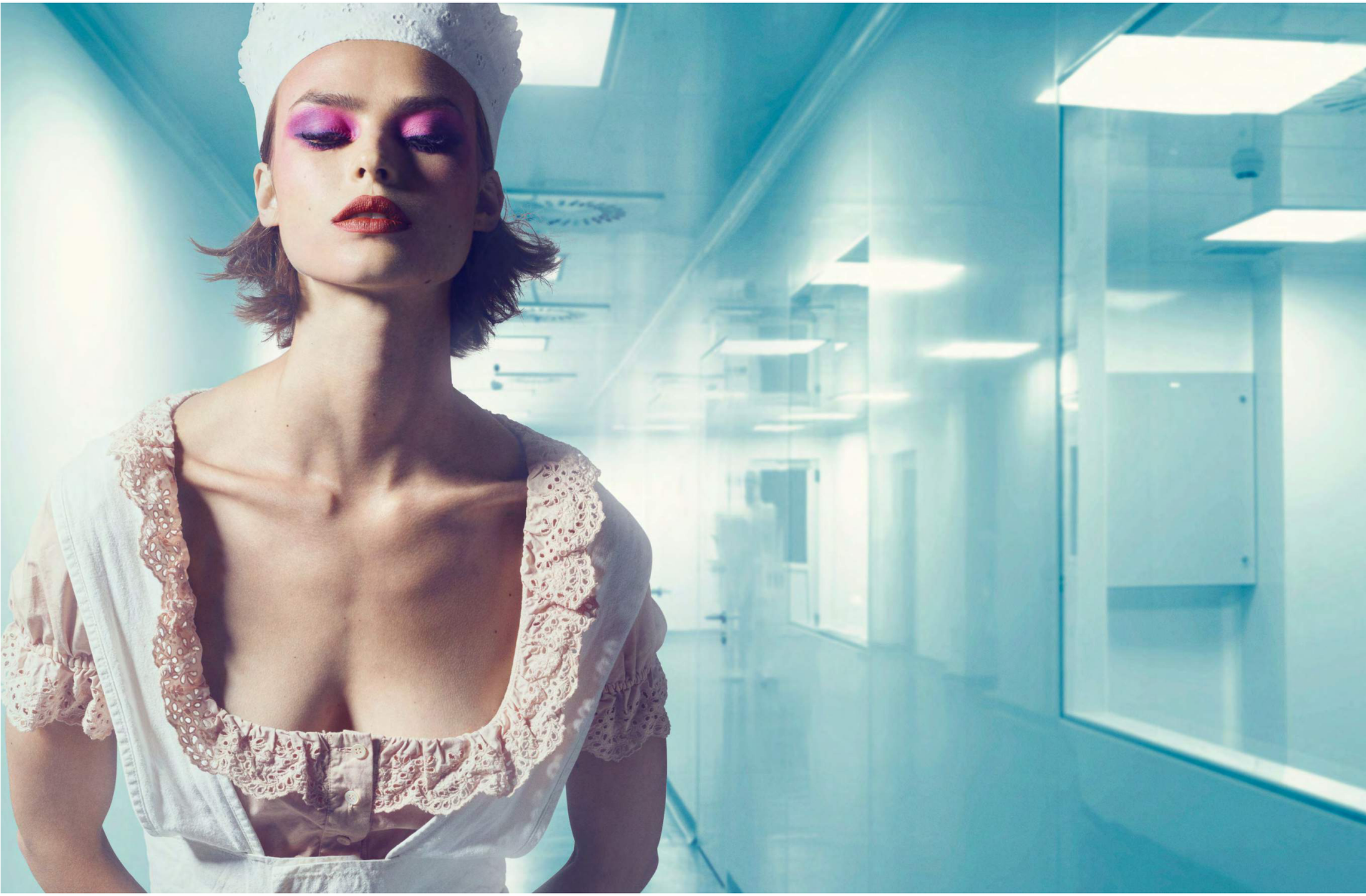
11. Robert Gober is an American sculptor. Best known for his room-size installations often featuring realistic wax body parts, his work has been shown at the Fondazione Prada.

12. Matthew Marks opened his first gallery in 1989 on Madison Avenue, New York. He later became one of the first art dealers to move to Chelsea. He represents artists including Gober, Nan Goldin and Jasper Johns.

‘I love uniforms. They require no thought.’

Miuccia Prada on nuns, nurses and sexy firemen.

Interview and styling by Katie Grand
Photographs by Norbert Schoerner



All clothes Prada and Miu Miu archives. Photographer's assistants: Guillaume Blondiau and Willow Williams. Post-production and visual effects: Rainer Usselmann, assisted by Hideki Shimamura. Choreographer: Neil Brown. Stylist's assistant: Oliver Volquardsen. Hair stylist: Syd Hayes for L'Oréal Paris. Hair stylist's assistant: Paula McCash. Make-up: Ciara O'Shea at LGA Management. Make-up assistant: Libby James. Nails: Marian Newman at Streeters. Production: Lauren Alderman at Lalaland. Models: Edie Campbell at DNA Models, Birgit Kos at The Society Models. Casting: Anita Bitton at The Establishment.

Quite frankly I love Miuccia – always have, always will. And if I could have anything in the world it would be her clothing and jewellery archive. She's the best-dressed woman on the planet; no one else comes close. There's already a lot of Prada and Miu Miu in my own archive, of course, which we used for this *System* shoot. Of all the pieces exhibited in *Pradasphere* – the 2014 travelling retrospective of definitive Prada looks from Miuccia's personal collection – I have about 90 percent in my own. On the opening night of *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations*, an exhibition at the Met in New York in 2012, I was fortunate enough to wear one of Miuccia's own skirts from the Autumn/Winter 2000 Prada collection, which went on to feature in *Pradasphere*. For *System*, we ended up using the shoes from my archive – a model-friendly size 40/41 – as those in the Prada archive are Miuccia's own, and at size 37 they're too small. For the same reason, it was my Prada footwear that featured in the shoots for the *Impossible Conversations* exhibition catalogue. We tend to like the same pieces, and there's definitely a mutual influence in what we wear. When I go to see her I'll turn up in Prada, and sometimes Miuccia will ring the store to try on the same piece herself. It works the other way round, too: I'm often inspired to buy something she's wearing. We've both been wearing the Miu Miu Autumn/Winter 2016 pearl shearling slippers all summer (I have six pairs of them). We were wearing them when the following conversation took place at Prada HQ in Milan during preparations for the Spring/Summer 2017 Miu Miu show. Miuccia was wearing hers with trousers (because, as she tells me, 'This is a period when I like trousers') and we sat in her office – the famous one with the Carsten Höller escape chute – drinking sparkling water with lemon juice.

Katie Grand: When *System* asked me to do something with the Prada and Miu Miu archives, which I obviously know well after having already shot with them, I thought it would be good to explore the specific idea of uniforms. It's crazy how much you refer back to uniforms over and over and over.

Miuccia Prada: Well, this is my fixation!

It was funny, because Edie Campbell said she felt this shoot was about female stereotypes, but that wasn't how I saw it at all. I just wanted to play with the recurring themes of uniforms in your work: the nun, the maid, the nurse, the school uniform.

In the past, people have asked me if I like working with a theme of uniforms, but I've never actually analysed the reason why I like them. There are a few things I want to say about this: I want firstly to say the serious stuff, then the fun stuff. Firstly, you can hide beneath a uniform, so it's something official that you present, and you don't have to tell anyone anything about yourself. That's probably the most 'serious' reason why I like them. Secondly, because I personally like and respect work and working, when you have a uniform you're generally devoted to a working activity, like all school uniforms, or those of nuns or nurses. For me it's all associated with working, and the declaration of liking what you do at work.

What was your school uniform like?

Black cotton, with a white collar, and open in the back.[1] I've never really thought about it before, but that is actually something I use all the time [in the collections].

And what shoes would you wear at school?

Shoes were free to choose; there was never really a strict rule about uniform, even in high school, like I think you have in England. You just had to cover up.

I had a green school uniform. That wasn't very sexy. Did you wear higher shoes as you got older?

No, because by the time I'd grown up, there were no rules about the height of your shoes. I was only expected to do that in primary school, from the age of four to eight. Actually, maybe I had tiny heels. [Laughs] I wanted to be fashionable, starting from secondary school.

When you didn't have to wear a uniform, did you dress really sexily?

No, but by the time I got to secondary school – when I was about 13 or 14 – I started *really* dressing up for school.[2]

Short skirts?

Yes, this was in the 1960s, so short skirts, but I remember I also liked wearing *calzettoni* [high socks] to school. And even gloves! I was probably the most elegant girl there, although there was one girl who would steal her mother's Chanel suits to wear to school.

'I'd wear short skirts, *calzettoni* and gloves to school; I was probably the most elegant girl there, although one girl wore her mother's Chanel suits.'

Did you steal your mother's clothes?
Not really, because my mother was too serious. Actually, I maybe did that later. For mini-skirts, I'd just slip out the door and then shorten the skirt, the typical story. But that's not about uniforms!

Well, it's about *your* uniform.
That was more about fashion. And freedom. In Milan, I was probably the first person to be a hippy, the first one to wear mini-skirts; I really loved fashion for myself. But going back to uniforms, I was also impressed when I first went to China – when there was still Maoism – with everyone dressed the same. I thought the uniform was fantastic.

Were you religious as a kid? Is that where the nun uniform comes from?
I was raised Catholic, but was never really drawn to religion. The nuns… maybe it's because of Buñuel's movies…[3]

What do you find sexy about nuns?
Well, I'm not talking specifically about nuns, but when you're covered up, there's all this mystery. I also like uniforms because of the idea of liking and respecting your rules. Actually – and this is probably why I like uniforms in general – very often people are so badly dressed, whereas in a uniform, they are always correct. That's why men always look more elegant, because it's so much easier to be elegant for a man. I would say they look 'proper', whereas for women there are so many choices available that it is much more difficult.

Men in bad, cheap suits aren't 'proper'.
No, but it's generally easier for a man to look put-together. Also, it's about not wanting to think about fashion.

What about your own sense of personal uniform?
I have a kind of personal uniform when I go to work. It's usually a pleated skirt, a T-shirt, and a sweater. Because for me, you have to *want* to dress up; it shouldn't be an obligation. So when you have no time, or you're thinking about something else, you must have something easy to wear, that makes you feel comfortable. That's another reason I like uniforms – they require no thought.

When you're really tired, do you ever just pick up what's on the floor and throw it on because you don't want to think about it?
No, but I know that sometimes a white T-shirt, a pleated skirt, and a sweater is just so easy – that's usually my favourite uniform! But the blue sweater should be the right one, and the pleated skirt should be the right one. One season, it's the plastic skirt; another season it's another one. It does depend though, because sometimes I will be more interested in dressing up, or I'll particularly like something. Sometimes there are things that I love so much that they become my uniform. So a uniform can also mean something that you feel comfortable in without thinking.

Do you have a Christmas uniform?
No. Christmas is a day when I try to dress up.

What, so mean like a fancy dress?
I actually have to say that I start each Christmas with the idea of really dressing up, but I usually end up reducing it a bit. Every season, it'll just be the newest thing that I like at the moment. Now, I've decided for eveningwear, I'll wear trousers. I've worn them twice already to the Met Gala.[4]

And for the *Vogue* dinner,[5] you wore trousers.
Yes, it's the only thing that feels different. And it's long. I don't like long skirts, so I think trousers are a good idea.

Why didn't you wear trousers for so long?
I like trousers for particular periods of time; this is a period when I like trousers.

I don't know if funereal is necessarily a uniform, but you make references to funereal clothes much more than you do to wedding clothes…
[Laughs] Wedding clothes can be so tacky! Funerals are much more elegant. Also, when I wanted to do a show about black lace, I thought it was the only way I could possibly like lace. For me, lace is only beautiful if it's black, and funereal, and super chic. Or white, for a baptism. I never thought about white for marriage, because I don't like it.

The other uniform worth discussing is maids.
Oh yes, maids. I think that uniforms are also a symbol of life and existence. They punctuate moments in life, whether in the hospital with nurses when you're born, or the church for a baptism, and school when you're young. Wedding dresses are also in a sense uniforms. So many jobs have uniforms, so they do punctuate periods in your life. They're always the most beautiful and elegant clothes, and you appear well dressed. To see someone well dressed is really a pleasure and for sure, all of this fascination was enhanced by movies.

Does it bother you when you see someone you think isn't well dressed, and they're wearing Miu Miu or Prada?
No. No. I would say that I never typically look too much at how people are dressed. I actually really don't care, because I'm much more interested in what they have to say or what they do – and I don't say that just to sound intellectual. But I will say that I am touched when people appear elegant. I don't really notice when people are not elegant, but I do when they are, when what they wear works. I also think that to be elegant or chic or trendy isn't a value for many people, and maybe shouldn't be a value, but I appreciate it very much. Elegance, and the ability to dress well, is really precious and somehow a mark of intelligence and culture, and huge sensibility and knowledge. I remember people asking me, 'How can I be elegant?' And I said, 'Study. Read books. Watch films'. If you are sensitive, cultivated, and intelligent, you can't dress so badly. Probably. Or maybe you don't care. But I don't believe saying that you don't care about clothes really exists, because even the decision *not* to dress is based on a choice, like only wearing black, or only wearing jeans and a T-shirt. So, dressing is really important, because it's the way you choose to present yourself to other people. But I do refuse to judge other people's choices. However, very often the people I like are well dressed! Does that sound terrible?

Not at all.
With culture goes knowledge, and a person can be neutral, but, in my opinion, somebody who is really well dressed cannot be stupid.

Is sportswear a uniform?
I've never really thought about it, but yes. Although it's not so much the uniform in sportswear that fascinates me.

Just watching the Olympics though, everyone looks so great.
Yes. And yes, it is a uniform. I watched the Olympics, too.

What was your favourite sport?
Well, more than the Olympics, I'm a fan of football now. I've *learned* to be a football fan, because I've always envied how men have so much fun. Every Sunday would be a disaster when I was a little girl, because all the men would only be interested in football. So I've learned about football and I've succeeded in becoming a fan.

Do you like football because it's such a masculine sport, and there aren't many women around, and you're kind of taken care of?
[Laughs] No, actually, if you really become a fan, you have *so* much fun watching football. I certainly do now.

Who do you go to the football with?
I don't go to matches. I watch it at home with a lot of people… Mainly men. [Laughs]. We play cards, discuss politics, and watch football.

Just going back to the subject of uniform. It's always a shame when you see people *out* of their uniforms. Often, you see people participating in sports and get so excited about them, then see them afterwards, and they seem dressed so strangely.
And, as you say, it is more 'strange' than 'bad'. It's because the uniform enhances them somehow. Because you think there is a whole world under that uniform that you don't know about. All the girls in love with uniforms, and the power of uniforms – not so much now, but certainly after the war – that was because the uniform was always considered mysterious and fascinating, and could hide secrets and a forbidden life, which made it sexy. Under the neutrality, you can imagine anything.

So many uniforms are black, and black is always sexy.
Doctors are considered very sexy.

And firemen.
Firemen are sexy.

The police?
Mmm…

'Wedding clothes can be so tacky! Funerals are much more elegant. For me, lace is only beautiful if it's black, and funereal, and super chic.'

1. The *grembiule* or smock is still worn by Italian children at nursery and primary school. The traditional girls' version features a white Peter Pan collar.

2. Miuccia Prada attended the Liceo Classico Giovanni Berchet in Milan. The high school's alumni include publisher Alberto Mondadori and film director Luchino Visconti.

3. A number of Luis Buñuel's films featured nuns, most famously, his Palme d'Or-winning *Viridiana* (1961), about a young novice and the tragic consequences of her widowed uncle's attempts to seduce her.

4. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute Benefit – or Met Gala, as it is better known – has been held almost annually since 1948 to raise money for the New York museum's fashion department. In 2016, the *New York Times* reported that tickets for those people unlucky enough not to be on the guest list were priced at $30,000.

5. The *Vogue* 100 Gala Dinner was held on May 23, 2016, in Kensington Gardens, London, to celebrate the centenary of the magazine's British edition.

‘Women still don’t rule the world, but we’re more articulate.’

Miuccia Prada tells Tavi why femininity means more than just girly motifs or womanly silhouettes.

Wandering around a hotel in my Miu Miu pyjamas with my friend.

By Tavi Gevinson

Prada Noah's Ark top against my shower curtain.

Miuccia Prada's appetite for the irreverent is as present in conversation as it is in her work. When we spoke over Skype this past July, every other sentence contradicted the last; 'I shouldn't say that!' became a form of punctuation. Watching her play devil's advocate with herself, it became obvious how she generates so many new ideas every season. As she discovered different rabbit holes to go down and opinions to try on, I was reminded of my favourite unexpected Prada and Miu Miu moments from over the years: the sailor hats, the clip-on journals, the naked-lady collars, the Mohawk shoes, the fairy-tale pyjamas.[1] This regard for nuance is how I know, when I wear her clothes, that a woman designed them. Prada's concept of femininity isn't restricted to girlish motifs or womanly silhouettes, unlike so many 'feminine' markers historically defined by men. She often examines and embraces such elements, and I absolutely identify with the concept of womanhood expressed in her subtly off-kilter details. Those possibilities so often left behind when design conventions are taken for granted; the clothing equivalent of 'on the other hand', another prominent feature of our conversation.

In the age of the personal brand, style has become a way to simplify, and then advertise, who we are. Miuccia Prada would prefer that it make room for all the selves we *forget* to be. To explore the facets one is accustomed to muting because they pose the threat of paradox. Revisiting our interview, I'm struck by one of her only consistencies: a repeated emphasis on what's 'more real, more personal, more human'.

Tavi Gevinson: How has your concept of your job to dress women changed over time?

Miuccia Prada: Personally, I grew up in a moment that was much freer, much simpler and more fun and exaggerated – more interesting. Recently, the pressure has become a little bit heavier. Fashion reaches so many more cultures, which is good in a way – you have to deal with different cultures, different races, different stories. That is what makes my work more exciting. At the same time, there was a freedom that we had back then, probably because it was more for an elite; until the 1980s, the people who wore these clothes were white, rich, sophisticated. It was a small world, so you knew exactly who your audience was, who you were talking to. You didn't even ask why because it was just for you, and the people sitting next to you.

In a way, that was much easier, but the world became more globalized. It became more interesting, but somehow more political, because you had to do what you thought was *right* and be general about it. I think that I want to go back to the way I used to get an idea: more human, more yourself, more real. So this idea of the brand covering the whole world is good and bad. It's bad because the work becomes more abstract, but at the same time, more interesting.

For me, it's kind of a changing moment, because I want to become more personal. I don't know, but that's what I'm feeling. Even though the whole world together is more interesting, my work can become too abstract.

Right. On one hand, you have consumers to cater to, but on the other, they're there for *your* point of view, not for you to do what you think they want to see.

No, but I never work thinking what other people want, because I'm not able to. Because I never had a muse; I've never thought about my customers. I've always done what I thought made sense. And placed myself as the opposite gender: *If I were a man, what would I wear?* That's always very personal. For example, this last show was very odd. It was about memories that only happen to women, and I had this sense of what women have had on their shoulders, like political issues. I tried to depict the difficulties and complexities, but also the beauty of women. But since then, because I went through all this analysis, I've wanted to go back to something more real, more human, more today. I think I've finished this work of analysing women's situations and histories, but I'm reacting now, and at some point you need a period of things that come from your *mind*: the human, private, real.

'I've never had a muse; I've never thought about my customers. I've always done what I thought made sense. Like, 'If I were a man, what would I wear?''

There are all these different archetypes of the roles women have been expected to play or have played throughout history in your work. It reminds me of Carl Jung and the idea that all people already contain all these different archetypes inside of them[1] –

Absolutely.

– and in the psyche. Does fashion allow you to try out those different roles?

Completely. What interests me, 100 percent, is women's lives. The lives of different people. I love even my real life,

Toilet selfie of Prada Lips skirt (iconic!) and shoes.

too; I have so many different ways to behave. I like to play with all the different possible ideas of a woman and to use them, so the clothes are what help you in this kind of expression. Fashion is to help you express your different selves. That, I think, is the interesting part of fashion basically. It should *help* your life.

I like too the idea that one doesn't cancel out the other. You can be all of them, and every day, you can choose a different one.
I couldn't agree more. It's the pleasure that women can find in possibilities. Sometimes it's preferable to do 10 different things badly than only one well. I have women friends who decided no family, no men, no this or that. And I prefer to be a bit of everything! But many different things. That variety is also really linked to me as a person. The moment I say red, I mean black, and the moment I say black, I also want pink. I notice there is not an opposition. I see the possibilities women can assess, because the female mind is more complex. Perhaps women still don't rule the world, are still in an inferior position – it's a complicated situation, but I'm being simplistic – because they are more complex. And command is easy. If you want to command directly an idea, it's, 'Yes, no, white, black'. Women say, 'Yes, black! *But*'!

And I think that's valued more in most professions, to have straightforward answers rather than ambiguity. It's almost like there isn't time to celebrate the benefits of having an answer that's more like, 'Yes, black! But'.
Do you prefer when someone says 'black-black' or 'black, but'?

I prefer 'black, but'!
Me too! But this is why we look less strong, because we are more 'but'; we are more complex, but also more articulate.

To me it's a strength to say 'but', to find all the different angles! But that's not how so much of the world functions. I was talking about this with an actress in a play that I'm in. American directors and casting directors are like, 'Who are you, what's your deal, give us your story, tell us who are you, just summarize it'. But Europeans want to have a conversation; you say something and they think about it, and then they respond.
Yes. So much. To describe another person with a few words is impossible. It's reductive. It is offensive for a human being. So sometimes maybe they criticize me because I change so much, but changing is what I am, and if you are going to explore different possibilities, it's always within yourself. I still want to go to the new and what's next and what's more interesting. So I don't know if the constant change is an advantage or disadvantage, but I am only me, so…

I think we're moving more and more towards everything needing to be reduced and simplified and easily described. I think that's the way of the news cycle and media, and how people receive information. Do you find any pressure to simplify the Prada brand or say, 'The Prada woman is...'?
Completely. Completely. That's why I brought it up in our discussion – sometimes I am criticized because I am changing too much, and that's too complicated. I really believe simplification, in this moment, is a very, very bad thing. It's a problem, but I'm deeply interested in it. People have too many messages, too much to look at, too much to see. I'm not just talking about fashion, I'm talking generally. We are so bombarded. At some point you need some clarity, so you need to reduce. Because it's like constant information. So I understand the need, but I think simplification is only good until a certain point. It can become banality.

For instance, we did a show at the Fondazione[3] with an artist called Nástio Mosquito.[4] And I was very surprised because he said, 'Why are clichés considered dumb? Clichés are fantastic! It means that it's something that everyone feels'. He's a young artist, a black artist, very, very good, and all his show is based on clichés and proverbs. Because if something is so repeated and so common… This is why I think restriction and simplification is really something to be analysed.

There's something great about the way clichés or proverbs create a common language. I wonder what you feel you've learned about women and how they want to see themselves by what's been most popular at Prada over the years.
I would have to say they love simplification. In my past, many years ago, there was more subtlety. Now this problem of simplification started to really, not

'It's better to do 10 things badly than only one well. I have women friends who decided no family, no men, no this or that. I prefer a bit of everything!'

Miu Miu choker in the middle of the desert.

bother me, but *engage* my deep interest. Is it good or is it bad? How can I *use* it? Sometimes I start using it, but then I go in the complete opposite direction. I couldn't care less about this problem; I just do what's more personal. This last show was this history of women, but even that, it was a *concept*. It was the rose; it was all a symbol of that, let's say, banality or cliché. So I don't know if I want to go on exploring that or just start something from scratch because it's more real, more personal. Who cares what women like or not? I could just do what I feel!

When there's more diffusion of culture, there's less space for niche. One of the reasons why I've decided I really like to grow is because it poses different questions. The niche I know so well, so much, it is not that interesting. It would be very easy for me to cater to a niche, but I like to challenge myself with a wider audience, a wider group of people, different from me. Because I think that from them, I learn so much more.

What do you feel you've learned about designing for women from that experience of trying to reach people outside of the niche?
To be honest, when I do shows, I just do what I like and think is right for that moment! Even if a wider audience is in the back of my mind. So your question is very relevant, because probably it is a very political proposition or concept. But actually, I rather like it that when I do the real fashion or the show and I go by instinct. How much these theoretical thoughts have influenced my work, I don't know. It's funny, actually, it's the first time that I think about that. That I talk about this theory, but when I work, I do the opposite.

I'm sure it finds its way in somehow. It's informing something.
Yes! Completely. Somehow it will inform the instinct, I'm sure, because it's something I'm really curious about.

I'm always surprised by what ends up resonating with people emotionally, and you can't really predict it or control it. You can't decide that you're going to get through to a group of people, and then do it for them, and get the result you want.
I agree. I always say that I don't have a muse. In the end, I'm not able to reason in terms of... *really* thinking about the result. Sometimes people think, 'What could I do to be elegant?' Sometimes I say, 'Study, study'.[5] OK, what does that mean, study? Study fashion, study movies, study literature, psychoanalysis. Be yourself, and afterwards, the problem doesn't exist. Because there are no rules. So one should do what one feels. So, of course, I tell myself if I do a thing that has to do with people, like a collection, it's impossible for me to do things that I don't like. I am not able to give someone a present if I don't like it. Say a friend of mine likes roses, but let's say that I don't like roses – I can't give her something that I don't like. I struggle with it myself. I see that mainly when I do presents; I can't buy anything, even if I know they'll want it more than anything, if I don't like it. It is a weakness and it is a strength.

What's a good present for you?
Anything. Anything. Because I like so many different things, in so many different fields. But you know, you can feel when something is not for you. I have to say that, now that I talk about it, the presents that I receive are usually always good.

Presents are hard for people with impeccable taste. I run into that problem with my friends I really admire.
I know, but I can give you the solution: give what you like. Don't think what they like. That's easy. Then it can't be wrong. Because it's a piece of yourself.

You talk about women's roles throughout history, and many of the collections have modernized some of those archetypes we were talking about before.

'Sometimes people think, 'What can I do to be more elegant?' Be yourself, and afterwards, the problem doesn't exist. Because there are no rules.'

More and more recently, people – and people in fashion – have been talking more about gender fluidity, and having more freedom in gender identity. It's modern in a different way. Is that something you're ever compelled to engage with through design or feel Prada is a part of?
I have this problem much more when I do the men than when I do women's. I always thought that they had less freedom than us. I was trying in a subtler way to change the rules, if not in a violent way. Maybe now it's changing, but for years, if you experimented with men's, you were not 'believable'. So I wanted to do small things, make small progress. The *size* of that – for sure, it's much more your subject – but looking at clothes, it's still not that much freedom. Last night I watched the movie

In a Miu Miu sweater, in the bathroom, on a date going very badly.

Alexander the Great, with Richard Burton.[6] And the way men were decorated! Even 100 years ago, in the late 19th century, the way men dressed – *jewels*! It's just curious to think about, that it feels like a new revolution, but in the past men were dressed up so much more than women.

And pink was originally for boys!
Pink and lilac! But I am more interested in the limits. Whatever the gender, I feel so much that everyone *knows* what they want, so with dress they should have that total freedom. As a designer, I am more interested in the limitations of the way men dress. There are so many limitations. Because the edge of the ridiculous is still very... The more of a snob they are, the less they dress up in what they like. It's true! They want to be sophisticated; they want to hate fashion. For my real taste, I like not too much dressing up. But more for men than for women. For women, I always love dressing up. But it's difficult to find men where there's much that's interesting. I shouldn't say that!

So it's more about working within the confines of what's been established as acceptable for men?
They have too many limits, but I think that it's a process. It's funny because for many years, I was criticized, I remember, for putting men in stuff that was not for men. One show, it was kind of a skirt on top of trousers. And the trousers had no opening. And I said, OK, let's call this a big belt! Because I like to play with rules, but look like I'm not breaking them. 'No, it's not a little skirt! It's a big belt!' Mainly at the beginning of my career, but probably also now, I would wonder what about a classic look is also profoundly disturbing. For the so-called avant-garde, it was obviously not avant-garde enough. Because I like going to that kind of subtle part.

Sometimes I analyse things and think, 'Why would they make a scandal about that kind of little belt?' But the show has the most incredible stuff, because I am serious about really trying to break some rules. These choices are small, but probably more relevant than bigger ones. I like to do something that doesn't *look* like change, but is.

Right. And part of why men have more limitations is because they're not allowed to look at all feminine.
Yes, for sure. So in the design I think about eccentricity and colour, because it's about freedom. You should be able to have whatever you want because you are free, not because you are worried about gender. You're a person, you have to be free. Those who oppress you – you have to do what you want.

Right! Sometimes it's not even about looking feminine, just being clear that a garment had a little extra care put in. Then it's like they care too much, and that's feminine, to care about fashion or appearances.
Yes, but why? This is another big, big, big subject. I know many people who would love to work in the fashion world, but in the end, they think it's a job for women. So many young people, the ones that really tell the truth to me sometimes, deep down, they think the fashion world is the most magnificent, the most exciting, the most open place, where you get to meet all the best people from movies, art, and so on. And so they would love to do it, but they still don't do it because it's a woman's job. We still have a long way to go. You and me are privileged, but out there, women are facing social and economic problems...

I find that fashion designers' ideas of beauty are actually so different from the standard of beauty in mainstream America. Like when it's the Oscars and all the girls wear these really beautiful dresses, all the fashion people I know are like, 'Ugh, boring'.
Absolutely. That is an example of how a cliché can be bad, when it only means being super normal.

'The most fun I have is when I debate with myself: Why is Prada sophisticated? Let's make it stupid! Why is Miu Miu playful? Let's make it smarter!'

It's very limiting. You have to be *very* normal.
All my career I've struggled against that. I never did a bias dress because what I did more is about the cliché of it. Women want to see that kind of beauty that is so imposed, so impersonal, that I don't find it beautiful. But I was very much criticized because I wanted to introduce in the clothes what was happening everywhere. In the art world, design, movies. But fashion said no. Still those rules were everywhere. Beauty rules are still very old-fashioned. We progressed a little bit, I think, in the 1990s. Now, since the beginning of the 2000s, we're really going backwards. The cliché of beauty is now getting stronger and stronger. Something that was normal in those years – I wouldn't even call it avant-garde, just challenging

In my Miu Miu collar, before going out.

a different way of being, much more complex, much more interesting, much more real, much more fun – now, it's not the best. But I hope that there will be a new change. Maybe we went too far and now we will go back.

You've toyed with these clichés of beauty, but then there are occasionally collections where you have said that you're trying to go back to this pure idea of beauty, that exists in the psyche. The kind that you would recognize in nature, or the same kind that people might have recognized years ago before being influenced so much by external ideals. From the time I grew up in, and how many images I've been surrounded by, I think today it would be harder for someone my age to be able to make that distinction between contemporary ideas of beauty that have been perpetuated by media and clichés, and then some type of 'pure' authentic beauty. Where did it come from for you? Does that make sense?
Yes, that is very, very interesting. I never thought about why – probably my education – I had an idea of what beauty was and how to break the rules, and *now* what is classic beauty? Maybe it is the Hollywood, Oscars kind... But I'm really interested in what you're saying because it's true. To a younger generation with so much information, which is the one that fits beauty?

But you can only think about your own ideas of it?
Yes, I think I feel the pressure, but in the end, it doesn't make any sense to me because there's nothing I can do with it.

Does Miu Miu function as a way to present a different idea of womanhood from Prada?
When I started Miu Miu,[7] I always said the distinction was – because Prada somehow was more serious, more thoughtful, more intellectual, let's say – Miu Miu was another part of myself, more fun. So it's another way to express the differences I have with myself. Sometimes no one knows which one is which, because I do Prada like I should do Miu Miu, and I do Miu Miu like I should do Prada. But if I do that, they tell me, 'See? You confuse people!' [Laughs] So probably this is the first time that I say it in public. But it's a part of me. Miu Miu is more improvised, more special, lighter, more instinctual.

I think part of being playful is trying to see what it's like to feel serious. And part of being intellectual is to see what it's like to be more playful. So those tendencies make sense for both sides of being a woman.
Thank you for analysing it because I am so happy you say that. That consoles me!

Good! The smartest people I know, the most *Prada* people I know, know that you need time to play and to feel like a child and to not think! They know you need Miu Miu in your life, too!
[Laughs] Completely, yes. It's nice to have both. Otherwise, my constant complex is the end of curiosity, so at least now there are different places to go. The most fun I have is when I debate with myself: 'Why is Prada sophisticated? Let's make it stupid! Why is Miu Miu so playful? Let's make it more smart!' That's a game I play with myself!

1. Spring-Summer 2008 ready-to-wear collection.

2. Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875-1961) believed that all humans share a collective unconscious. This includes archetypes, figures such as the mother or the wise old man universally recognized by people regardless of the culture into which they were born.

3. The Fondazione Prada, originally founded in 1993 by Miuccia Prada and her husband Patrizio Bertelli, promotes contemporary art and culture. Since then it has created, according to its website, "Utopian' monographic artist commissions, contemporary philosophy conferences, research exhibitions and initiatives related to the field of cinema'. In May 2015, the Fondazione opened a permanent space in southeast Milan designed by architect Rem Koolhaas and OMA.

4. Nástio Mosquito was born in Luanda, Angola, in 1981. The artist, currently based in Ghent, Belgium, works in performance, music, video, installation, sound and poetry.

5. Miuccia Prada received a PhD in political science from the University of Milan.

6. *Alexander the Great*, directed by Robert Rossen, starred Burton as Alexander and Peter Cushing as his enemy Memnon of Rhodes. The *New York Times*' review of March 29, 1956, called it 'an overlong but thoughtful and spectacular entertainment'.

7. Miu Miu was founded in 1993 as, according to the Prada Group's website, 'a private territory of expression and a creative playground, fittingly christened with Miuccia Prada's family nickname'.

For my eyes only

A model ponders her hyper-visibility.
By Kinga Rajzak. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

I lock the door unhurriedly, taking a sluggish, sleepy step onto the sidewalk. I shuffle ahead unwillingly in the toasty summery heat. It is nearly eight in the morning. The beast's eye may be half shut, but it will not be long until it pops open. The city's insatiable desire to capture you with its omnivorous gaze will wake soon enough. I still have a moment to breathe before I am overtly out there – visible and mired in my 'fleshliness'. Manhattan first needs to awaken to this gloriously muggy day before it can give free rein to its curious perception: a relatively unselective urgency to absorb by looking. I do not think I am special, yet I am singled out by its voracious gaze, a gaze that not only looks, but also shows. In this sense I will be assigned to an imaginary context – whatever that may be – harnessed and informed by my body's presence in space. I cannot be in denial. After all, I have been in fashion as a model for over a decade. The bodily capital – thanks, mum and dad – is indisputably there and will invite scrutiny, even if I pretend that it will not. No need to be ostentatious. So yes, I will interact with my environment soon enough. The city will blow me up on its neatly cut streets, making me visibly available. The exposure to its denizens will not catch me off guard though. *I know how we' rollin'*.

I remember the dude by the crosswalk who offered me sex; the florist at the corner deli who proposed; and the random fellow who sent a bottle to my table while I was dining with friends. You name it. Sometimes you laugh, you smirk, you beam a gracious, 'thank you', 'oh, you are funny', 'how generous'. Other times, you sigh and purse your lips, before swallowing an irritated, 'Leave me alone, will you'. There's no problem initiating a micro chitchat with me; I am very amicable, gregarious and all. It's just that being too eagerly in my face because you find me appealing is a no-no.

Over the years I have learned to shrug off all these benign little harassments. Yet if I said that being visibly magnetic was a torturous ordeal, then it would be one of the most memorable extracts from the biggest cock-and-bull story of all time. I mean everybody likes to be considered alluring, because feeling desirable creates confidence. We all want to be given credit for possessing that surplus X factor that will make others tick. Yet in the long run, this form of desirability playing out on the surface is anything but fulfilling – at least, for me.

Often, the problem is not with hyper-visibility, but its opposite, invisibility. It seems that in intellectual circles I need to labour harder to prove myself as someone who isn't superficial and narcissistically navel-gazing, totally high on her looks. What I am talking about is good old blanket stereotyping, that totally bogus dichotomy of the pretty and the dumb, which despite its genuinely misconstrued logic remains uncannily in place. People will scoff, 'No, you're wrong; we've moved beyond this!' But let me tell you, as antagonistic as it sounds, this duo still hovers in the air as some kind of unarticulated truth. It is as if body and intellect were somehow mutually exclusive.

I conceived of my body first in fashion. Prior to becoming a model, I had had next to no sensation of the zest of my physical presence. Understandably then, to be contained in this vessel, to belong to *her*, my visual shell that is as much me as it is not, penetrates to deep psychic ends. It is perhaps the taste of my self that has become more distinctive over the years, the flavour of 'embodied-ness' above and beyond all other feelings that will remain indescribable here. However, it was also as a part of the fashion industry and this inhabited, visible body that I came to ask questions about the boundaries that played a part in constructing my identity. For this I will remain forever grateful to fashion, since it was within its folds that I got to un-think and re-think whatever I had understood about the frontiers of embodiment and the self.

As you can see, modelling means that my life is crisscrossed with the contingencies of visibility, invisibility and hyper-visibility. While I used to take the interplay of their effects rather seriously, these days I am far more nonchalant about their 'impact'. Why? It is easy: I have figured out that it is best to take the responses to my image with a pinch of salt.

I shall know better.

Branding à la chinoise

Where the PowerPoint presentation meets the runway. By Hung Huang. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

The event is one of a kind, I was told. 'You have seen fashion shows, but you have never seen a show with just one garment – the jacket,' the Brand VP of K-Boxing tells me. 'We are paying tribute to the jacket, so we are doing a show with 80 jackets.'

I try to picture a show with only jackets. I see images of male models in swim trunks or just underwear – or maybe nothing, if they really want to generate buzz or scandal. K-Boxing has been selling jackets to Chinese men for 36 years. In my mind, its product is what Communist officials wear; the kind of black or navy blue windbreaker they choose when they want to dress casually. The brand has thousands of franchised stores in China and sales in the hundreds of millions of renminbi. It claims its brand name is worth over 40 billion renminbi (nearly US$6 billion). This is its first-ever fashion show.

The show venue is the Shanghai Center, the tallest building in China. Still not completely finished, it provides an amazing view of Shanghai, if you can ignore the smell of reeking construction chemicals. The clothes, it turns out, are not only jackets but also suits and trench coats. They are good copies of Italian tailoring, with a touch of Nazi. After all, the English name of the show is 'Hail Jacket'.

Most successful local Chinese garment brands sells their products through franchisees, so shows are a strictly buying affair. Icicle, a high-end local women's brand used to organize a show every season for its franchisees only. I once went to a show where there was a PowerPoint presentation right after the runway show.

Chinese brands are envious of Western brands and so all have a role model. The owner of Sept Wolf, another Chinese menswear brand, openly proclaims it as the Chinese Ralph Lauren, and K-Boxing has made various claims to be the Chinese Louis Vuitton. But until now, the admiration would stop at boastful comparisons, because no one was willing to spend the money to build a brand.

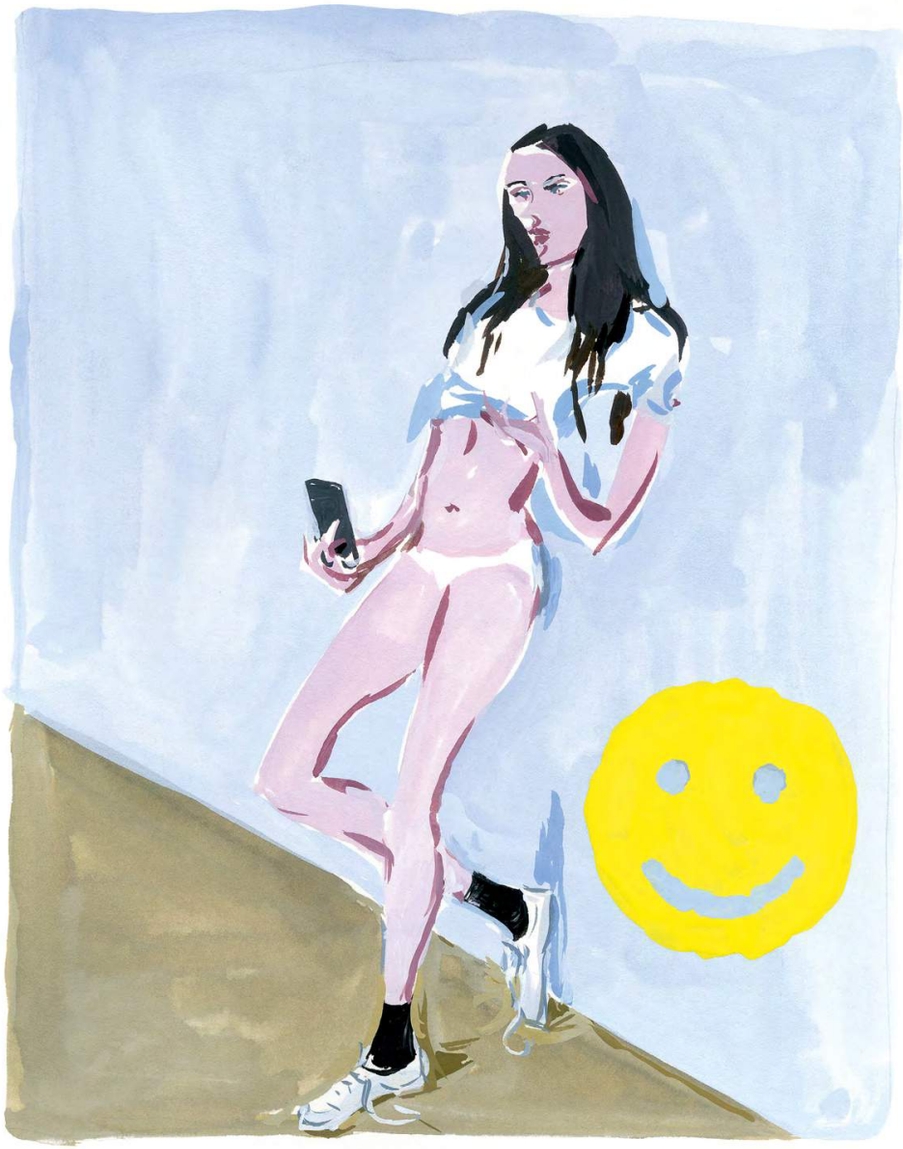
Recently, however, Chinese fashion companies have all of a sudden cashed in on their franchise network and become all about the brand. They are doing shows, publishing books, and inviting media and key opinion leaders to previously sales-only fashion shows. There is a genuine change of attitude towards spending money on building brands. They are ready to splurge.

Two things brought on this rush to brand in China. First of all, most Chinese fashion brands built a retail consumer base in third- and fourth-tier cities, where international brands lacked reach. Now their consumer base is being eroded by e-commerce. Even when Chinese brands are copying Western brands, copies of copies are quickly available online on Taobao, China's version of eBay. Statistics show that almost half of fashion retail in China has moved online, forcing local Chinese brands to invest more in building their brands.

The second reason is the millennials. They want real brands; they don't want cheap anymore. They prefer young independent designers to lacklustre established Chinese companies, which have always competed on price, not creativity. This is forcing older Chinese brands to create new stories – even if it's a 'story' called 'Hail Jacket'.

Despite this recent rush to get on-brand, I wouldn't encourage marketing executives to quit their London jobs and rush over to Shanghai just yet. Most private Chinese companies are extremely patriarchal, with the owner sitting all Godfather-like on the throne. I worked as a consultant to a developer that wanted to brand its urban development. After entertaining eight pitches from various agencies, the owner finally decided to say no to all of them – and decided she would do it her way. The result was three days of free food and beverages for 40,000 people on site.

So even if there might be an urgent need to brand, making it a reality in China is still a long way off.



The Insta-appeal of Gen Z

Meet the influencers who learned to swipe before they could walk. By Elizabeth Jane Bishop. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

Curious, hyper-aware, and tethered to tech. Those are some of the traits I share with my generation, Gen Z. Compared to Gen X, or even millennials, we're very different. But why?

Technology and the speed at which information is shared is undoubtedly one of the biggest factors influencing our changing values, ethics and attributes. The birth of Gen Z has seen a generation learn to swipe before we can walk, and connect to the Internet faster than we connect with our own parents. We're often referred to as 'Generation Zombie', which although offensive, is probably accurate.

Growing up in a connected world, where we can see, buy, watch and read almost anything makes us almost unmarketable to. We can find out about you, your mum or your product in a few clicks. We've grown up watching the world – which, as someone who started blogging aged 15, I can say has its downsides – so we know if you're authentic, sticking to your guns. I was so young when I started out that my followers have grown with me. Suddenly whitewashing my life is not an option – and that's a good thing. We're less sceptical of each other, having watched each other grow up.

Living in the most marketed-to generation ever – we can't even escape commercial penetration in the safety of our own rooms – has also made us tech savvy. How else could someone like me, a small-town girl, create a name for myself online? When you start blogging as a creative outlet, you don't expect to find yourself with 693,000 followers. Being able to have that reach, though, has bred new methods of marketing: the twisted beautiful world of social media has created 'influencers'.

I, myself, am considered an 'influencer': an individual who, according to Google, has above-average impact on a specific group, often connected to media outlets or consumer groups. A marketer would have said 'tribes', but I don't work in branding or PR. Influencers are normal people like me, and like me, they didn't plan for this to happen.

My story started in a small countryside town in Staffordshire (not the creative hub you'd expect of any major city in fashion or tech). I was bullied for who I am, and Tumblr and Instagram became channels to connect to like-minded people. They allowed me to express my interests in the arts without someone laughing or teasing me for it (there's no block button IRL, unfortunately).

I couldn't tell you when I hit the 'of influence' mark on whatever scale they're using to keep track. The amount of people following me still doesn't register unless I'm reminded of it. I know that after six months I had almost 20,000 followers. People became interested not only in what I liked, but in me as a person (which I'm still not used to). After being asked to share pictures of myself I started posting them on Tumblr. I joined Instagram in 2012. In a year, I had 80,000 followers and companies approaching me to promote product. Come on, as a then-16 year-old girl in her bedroom, how could I hate that?

Cue an agent stepping in and telling me I could model. (WTF?) She explained how people like me – 'influencers' – were getting paid hefty amounts of money for posts of them solo selfie-ing in their bedrooms. At the time I was moving to London to study communications and we know money doesn't grow on trees. It was relatively easy income for basically being myself.

All in all, we influencers, bloggers – *whatever* – are just people trying to earn a living doing what we love, just like the people behind the brands. So there needs to be mutual respect between brands and influencers regarding payment for placement. Influencers connect with Gen Z because they're real people sharing real things. We're more collaborators than mouthpieces. It's obvious to us when something's Photoshopped or forced. Gen Z, although young, is not stupid.

For me, social media was a wonderful accident with life-changing outcomes. In my opinion, as an influencer, for brands to truly create something influential, something with resonance, they've got to use real people in their campaigns. It's common sense. We want to relate to what we see. So choose wisely, do your research, and you'll see results.

Couture Future

By Sébastien Meyer and Arnaud Vaillant, of Courrèges

Courrèges couture, Autumn/Winter 1961. ©Courrèges archive.

Still from Björk, 'All is Full of Love' music video, directed by Chris Cunningham. ©Universal Music Publishing Ltd/Famous Music, 1999.

André Courrèges had one vision: to redefine Parisian couture.
Luxury formed the foundation of his brand of futurism.

The unbroken lines, the dropped shoulder still permeate visions of what lies ahead.
Our view of the future is still one embedded in Courrèges' past.

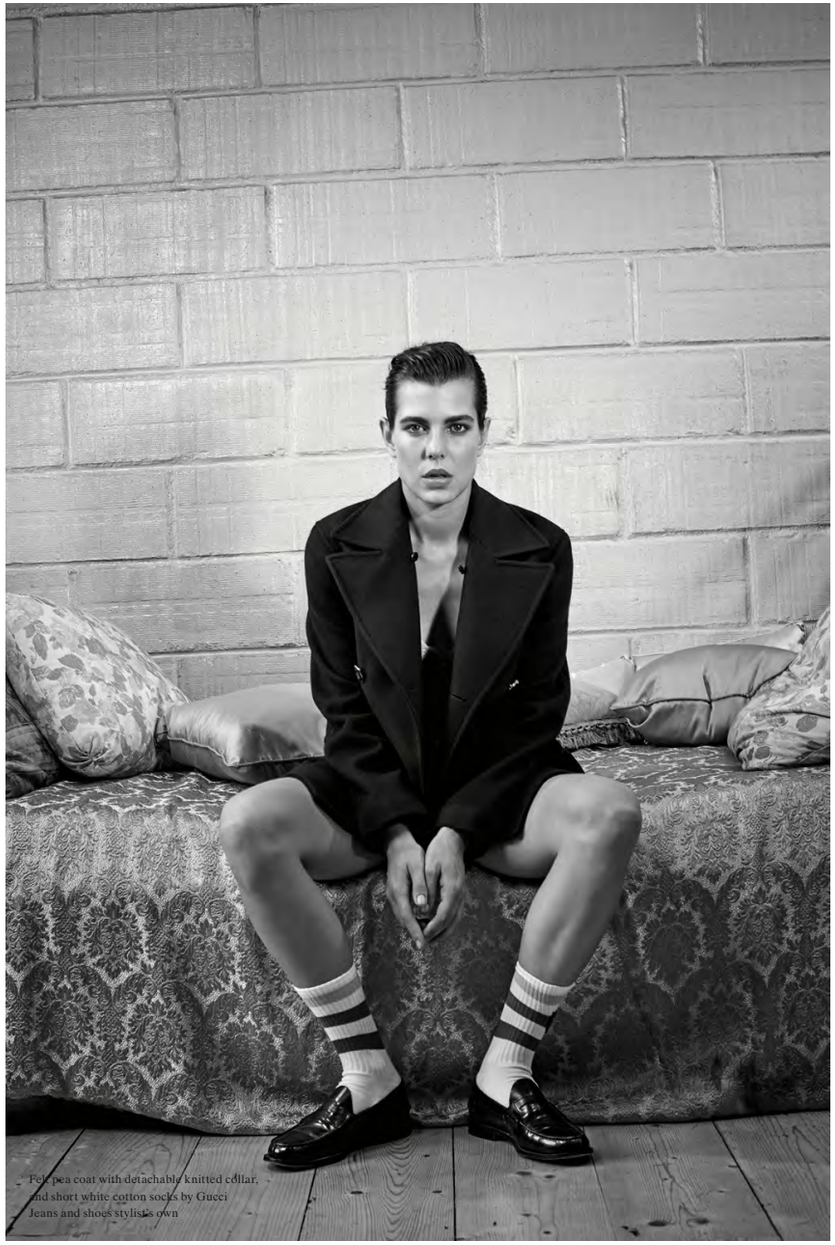
‘It’s about being masculine and feminine at the same time.’

Charlotte Casiraghi mans up in this season’s Gucci.

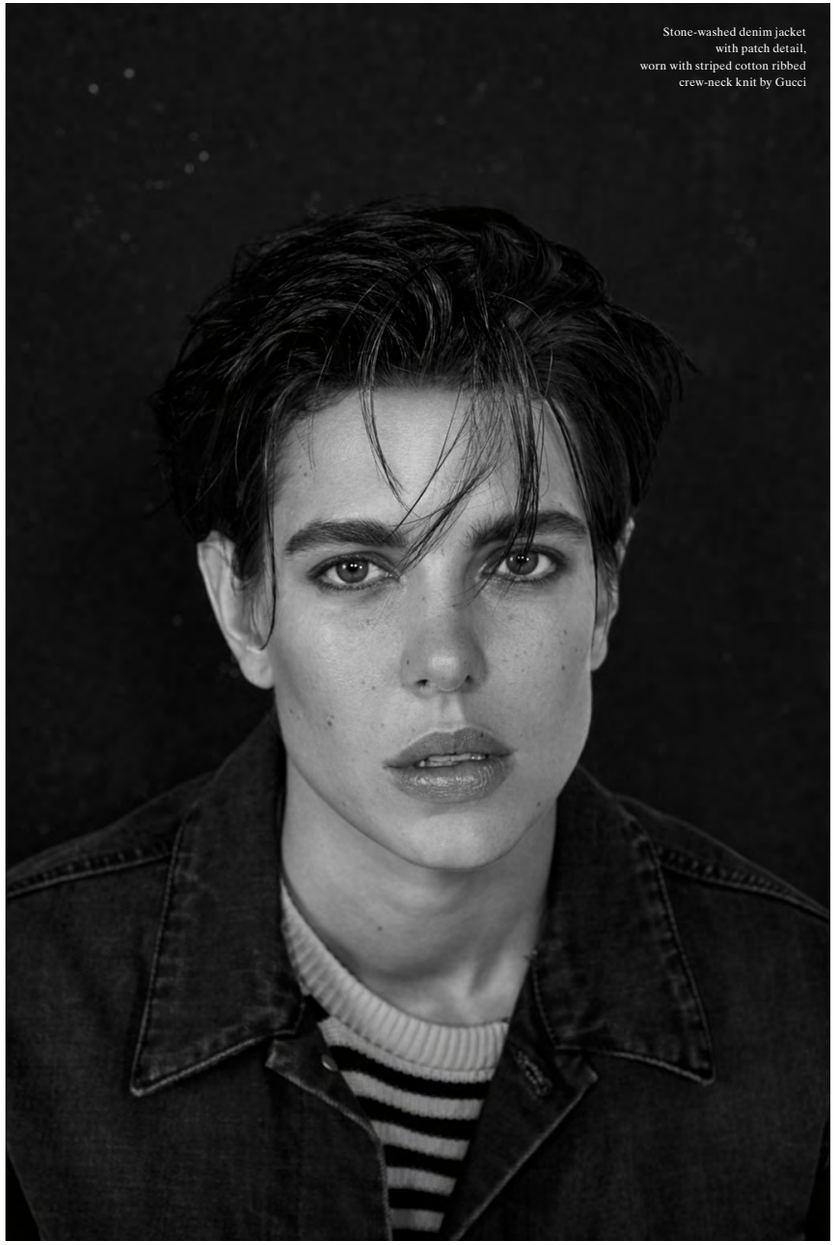
Photographs by Collier Schorr
Styling by R.R.

Previous page:
Blue-and-white gingham
short-sleeved shirt by Gucci

Vintage black calfskin biker jacket,
with red checked shirt, white T-shirt,
and black stone-washed denim by Gucci



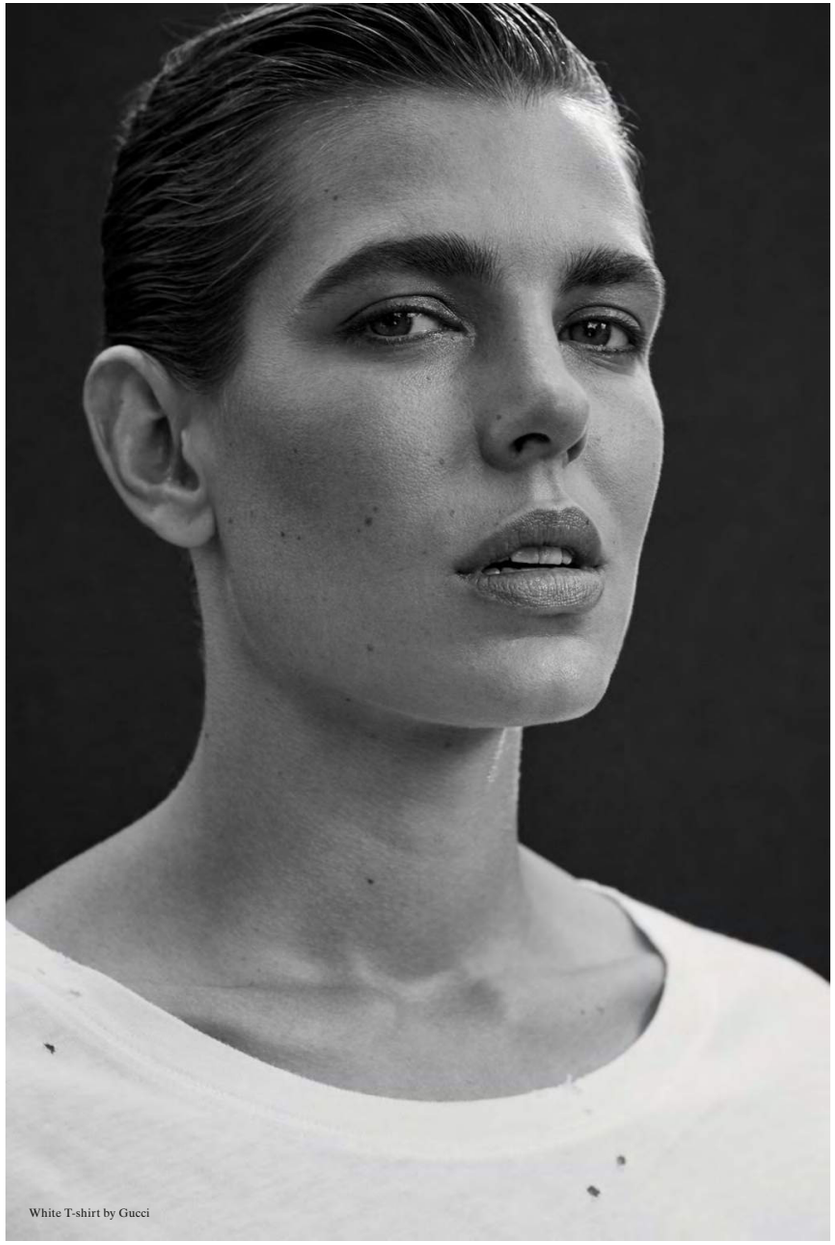
Felt pea coat with detachable knitted collar, and short white cotton socks by Gucci
Jeans and shoes stylist's own



Stone-washed denim jacket
with patch detail,
worn with striped cotton ribbed
crew-neck knit by Gucci

Felt bomber jacket with patch detail and leather sleeves, worn with white T-shirt, and chlorine-washed denim, all by Gucci

Vintage woollen suit by Gucci,
and watch by Montblanc



White T-shirt by Gucci

Photographer's assistant: Jonathan Ervin. Digital tech: Stefano Poli. Local photographer's assistants: Edoardo Cafasso and Leonardo Damo. Stylist's assistant: Stephanie Kherlakian. Tailor: Marloes Mandaat. Hair: Ju (Shon) Hyungsun at Julian Watson Agency. Make-up: Thomas de Kluyver. Nails: Catia Piazza. Production: Emanuele Masciomi at MAI London. Props: Victoria Salomoni, assisted by Pietro Camacci. Special thanks: Gucci, Studio Daylight Roma, Hotel Locarno in Rome, and Neela @ MAI Productions.

Photographer Collier Schorr arrived in fashion from a fine-art background, and it's hard not to think that she brought some subtext with her on the journey. Because her fashion work delves deeper into its subjects than we're used to, challenging and confronting constructed ideals of identity and beauty.

Today, Schorr moves between art and commercial work. Seemingly enjoying the contradictions and tensions of her dual practice, her work marks out a space in which she challenges how certain codes – leather jackets as tough; dark suits as inherently masculine – are made to feel natural by nothing more complicated than repetition. So what happens when you take men's clothes that are already gender fluid – like Gucci's recent menswear – and slip it onto a woman? Particularly when that woman is Charlotte Casiraghi, a Gucci muse, burdened by her own particular forms of coded expectation: she is the granddaughter of Grace Kelly, that archetypal Hollywood beauty, real-life princess, and the inspiration for Gucci's 1966 Flora fragrance.

For Collier, the allure of that royal heritage was perfect material to distort, as seen in these photographs, shot for *System* in early September in Rome. The shoot, it turned out, was not only the perfect moment to take on gendered archetypes, but also the chance for a frank, involved and strangely seldom-witnessed discussion between photographer and subject. For Collier, the experience was rewarding: 'I've never before felt the sense of collaboration so strongly with a subject – every photographer should do this.'

Let's start with society's shifting attitudes towards beauty, gender and identity. What do you think has shaped your attitudes?

Collier Schorr: I think I learned certain things from looking at pictures and the movies about ways I could be a powerful girl. And things that I could borrow from men portrayed as a certain kind of character. It seemed like I could just borrow the haircut or a jacket to build my own identity. You have to go back a long way to figure out what came first though: wanting to be somebody by copying something or naturally gravitating to something and picking it up, making it yours.

Charlotte Casiraghi: I think of the Simone de Beauvoir quote: 'On ne naît pas femme, on le devient.'[1] Meaning that a 'woman' is something you become; it's something you construct. We're all made of biology, but culturally speaking, we have both the feminine and the masculine in us and in the mannerisms we pick up. It's how you embrace both of them, picking up different postures from each that is interesting. That's a more attractive idea, because then it truly becomes yours.

Define 'attractive'. What do you consider 'beautiful'?

Collier: I've always thought of beauty as something that existed outside of me. When I was younger, I always had a beautiful friend. And I realized that for years and years and years, if I had a beautiful friend, I felt safe with that person. And then I ended up in beauty as a job. I think that means I have a very different idea about beauty. I'm surrounded by the desire to kind of domesticate beauty, in a way, through working. I used to think that beauty was the thing that made life easier, yet it feels like it's enjoyed by everybody except the person that has it.

How do you think that your views on beauty might connect to gender? We often discuss them together, as if they're inextricably linked.

Charlotte: They're both uncomfortable. Because of what Collier just said, but also because, with gender, you sometimes feel people suffer from the separation of the masculine and feminine. That each of them, being mutually exclusive, does not fit with what or how they want to communicate about themselves. As if it's dangerous to be both, or to let another one in. Maybe that's why we see androgyny – you erase sexual identity by creating something that has no distinct sexual identity.

Collier: To address androgyny – or at least, what happens to me – I'll see a boy wearing a lacy shirt, and I'll be really attracted to that. I'll want to wear that kind of shirt, because in my mind sometimes, I'm a boy wearing girls' things. But the reality is that if I put something on, I'm not a boy wearing a girl's shirt, I'm a girl wearing a girl's shirt.

Charlotte: Often, we think we're playing with the masculine and feminine by wearing certain clothes, by embracing certain stereotypes. The myth of androgyny that you see everywhere in fashion is women dressing more masculine or men dressing more feminine. Of course, a dress doesn't just belong to a girl, and a suit doesn't just belong a man.

'I used to think that beauty was the thing that made life easier, yet it feels like it's enjoyed by everybody except the person who has it.'

Collier: I think language is really vulnerable right now. When you think about desire and identity, and you take the terms 'masculinity' and 'femininity', the complication is in the definition of what those things are. My 'masculine side' – what is that? Is that just an aggressive side, a tough side, an independent side? And my 'feminine side'– is it just intuitive or sensitive? I think it's always been this good-and-evil-type dichotomy. Soft woman, hard man. So if you present this masculine thing…
Charlotte: …that means you're tough inside. We need reassuring symbols, like if a man puts a suit on, he's assertive or he's tough. Fashion has opened up the fact that you can have access to different characters by associating with codes aligned with certain genders or sexuality. It's a symbol within a broader construction; it's cultural. And it's liberating, but at the same time it can sometimes block a deeper reflection on your own identity, because you *can* just take – copy and paste.
Collier: That's probably why the most important thing in my work has been creating a kind of intimacy, making something intimate public. Because I think that people need to see images that have feelings, because they're just inundated with artifice now that fashion is so much more accessible. I'm not saying that the feelings I evoke in my pictures are ones that come out of deep relationships, but they come out of the desire to be connected.

Did fashion play a part in shaping those feelings?
Collier: It did, I guess. I can think of a girl at high school who was two years younger than me, who I thought was absolutely beautiful, and I would dress like her in hopes that she would recognize that we were in some way 'connected'. Of course, she never did. I've since learned that that's a farce, but that's what is sold to us in fashion. This idea that if you wear a certain uniform or a certain kind of thing, another person wearing that kind of thing will recognize that shared territory. Like, for gay men, in the 1970s and 1980s, that whole uniform became a coded language[2] so that they could recognize each other in the streets. But fashion can also have the power to fuck you up sexually. Just looking at the way clothing is positioned and sold to us can make us either feel we can be anything or we'll never be that.
Charlotte: You can reassure yourself with a style that you control, and control what other people see of you, and that's great, but at the same time, it can be very imprisoning.
Collier: Everyone you meet, your body is immediately taking measure of their body. You're figuring out who you are in that moment against an assessment of who they are. I remember that every gay person was called Boy George[3] in the 1980s. It was kind of like, 'Oh, hey, look at Boy George'. And of course, none of us look like Boy George, but it was a code for saying, 'Oh, they're so different from whoever it is I think I am'.
Charlotte: It's exhausting trying to always send a clear message to other people. And I don't necessarily need clothes to express certain things to the world. That's why I sometimes like very neutral clothes. That's why sometimes it's just easier to pick up a white T-shirt and jeans.
Collier: I'm thinking that Charlotte and I are more aligned than not.

Neither of you are particularly 'girly'.
Collier: We're both sort of comfortable being women, but open to and engaged with the attributes of men. And we're both wearing a white shirt and jeans.
Charlotte: I do enjoy flowery dresses and prints though; things that might seem 'girly'. But you're right. I do really enjoy having the choice to embrace both. I find that to have both gives me so much more power of expression. I can wear a little floral dress or a suit and not feel as if I'm a different person or trying to enter a different character. I just feel that both of those are valid and a part of me. Going back to the subject of being inundated with clothes and fashion and images, I totally agree with Collier when she mentioned that fashion has taken a very strong place in society, not only as an industry, but also for young people in general. They embrace fashion much more than other generations. A kid today is more communicative in images than words, which, I find a little more difficult to deal with.

Why?
Charlotte: Because of that access to fashion, and having so many tools at your disposal to transform yourself to such an extent. It's liberating, but at the same time, can make for caricature.

Where were you looking, in terms of references for your own gender and beauty ideals, at that age?

'The most important thing in my work has been creating a kind of intimacy. Because I think that people need to see images that have feelings.'

Collier: For me, when I was a kid, your aunt,[4] Charlotte, was probably the quintessential… I kind of aspired to be that kind of girl, like I saw those pictures of her wearing shorts and a tennis shirt, and the haircut she had, and the kind of toughness that she showed. I think meeting you was in a way a continuation of that. You're not your aunt, but it's a continuation of a certain… I'm not sure, a curiosity that relates to surface. Intrigue.

Did that intrigue affect the way you prepared for this shoot?
Collier: For me, excitement before a shoot is when I'm already excited before I meet the subject. I've already created a connection in my head, and it was easier having looked at your aunt growing up. I think that has to do with being a kid, and looking at pictures, and feeling like I could know that person if I looked deep enough in that picture, and if I looked for enough clues. As a kid, I would collect pictures of certain actresses or models, because if I had enough pictures, it was like putting together a profile. I could start to figure them out. Still today, I really love being interested in the person I'm shooting.

What do Collier's thoughts make you feel, Charlotte?
Charlotte: The fact that you're not saying, 'Oh, I think you're that type of girl or woman' or 'you have a vulnerability in your eyes' appeals to me. You've stayed very open while shooting, and I think that's important.
Collier: I think that's because I don't want anything else beyond the emotional connection in the pictures. A picture or a sitting isn't a means to something else, or proving you to be however people might imagine. And I think there is a fantasy about fashion photography as a kind of seduction. It is a seduction to get across a message; a seduction between two people who are kind of entering into this really vulnerable agreement, to look at each other, and to do this dance.

Is that vulnerability always there? Do you need confidence from a subject, as you would when shooting professional models?
Collier: No, because not everyone is confident. It would be really boring if, every day, you went to take pictures of people who thought they were amazing, and didn't have any cracks or sadness.

Besides the element of seduction, what other dynamics arise when you photograph someone?
Collier: For me, photography is a really special way to spend time with someone, even if it's complicated by the mechanisms of a sitting. It's a really interesting process, because you're with somebody who you immediately want to put at ease and comfort, but you're putting them in a situation where it's almost impossible for them to feel immediately comfortable. It's like you go through this thing together, and hopefully end up in a place where it starts to just be a rhythm of understanding what the other person wants. I don't go into a shoot saying, 'Well, you have to be like this, because this is how I see you, and I want you to be like this'. We should only do the pictures you feel excited about doing. It just doesn't make sense for me to force somebody to be someone they're not. I also think that people play more when you give them the space to do so.
Charlotte: What I find interesting is that you can never see yourself as others see you. That's what is happening right now: people with mirrors constantly in their faces or with selfies, constantly trying to see or control the way they look in other people's eyes. It's quite new, but generally, you don't really see yourself moving around in a room.

Do you enjoy looking at pictures of yourself?
Charlotte: I can feel surprised at having seen something that is perhaps fragile or strong, and then think that maybe other people see that in me. I might know it's in me, but I don't know if other people see me that way. But it's important for me not to become too attached to the image or archetype, because I feel like I might lose my footing; and I feel like what I can build every day in my day-to-day life is more important, more valuable.

Do you enjoy allowing people to see this side of you?
Charlotte: I have no problem with people seeing me vulnerable. If I need to cry, I'll cry, and I don't feel uncomfortable if people see me like that.
Collier: Listening to Charlotte makes me realize how hard it would be for me to answer these questions. You could ask me, 'What does it feel like to make a picture?', and that's a easy question to answer. But if you asked me what you're

'I have no problem with people seeing me vulnerable. If I need to cry, I'll cry, and I don't feel uncomfortable if people see me like that.'

asking Charlotte – what does it feel like to be in a picture or have people look at you in a certain way – then all of sudden, I'm flooded with a fear of narcissism. Flooded with fear of people looking at me or what it means to want to be seen. I always think that pictures of people, unless it's a self-portrait, are about the combined interest in looking together.
Charlotte: But it has to be detached from yourself. I find it interesting if people see these pictures and find them beautiful, but I don't want people to find *me* more interesting or beautiful because of the pictures. Just enjoy looking at the image because it's beautifully photographed. I find giving importance to the image can give you confidence for a split second, but that's it. It's just about that split second and how you appear at face value to someone else.

idea of attraction, and self-expression.
Charlotte: I find that extremely liberating. If it becomes only a protection or rejection of your own gender, then it's less interesting.
Collier: You're not interested in angry androgyny.
Charlotte: It's about being both at the same time, and that's interesting, and not just being all or nothing.
Collier: I don't think that you're number one on androgyny's hit-list of targets. It's not like you're just waiting to made over into a man! You do fit into the history of pictures that I'm interested in, though. You're someone who's not a reference; you're not 50 years old, someone who used to be in pictures; you're somebody who is *now,* and we're in a different time. That was the excitement of putting us together, I think. It's not

we've maybe highlighted something. I think we're both interested enough in the identity at hand that we haven't needed to transform it. I think any time that you put on clothes from a collection, you're kind of fine-tuning something, playing with it a little bit, but you're not turning it into something else. You're not turning it into something that wasn't there. That's the exciting thing, I think. Ultimately, a transformation isn't as satisfying as getting closer to the person.

Charlotte, what are your thoughts on the pictures, and what you're aiming to do with this 'non-transformation'?
Charlotte: I think I was just always trying to find a way of keeping something that was mine. I was willing to explore new things, trying to keep something

'You have to trust the photographer, but also let yourself be transported by things you couldn't predict or control.'

Collier, does the so-called perfection expected, particularly in fashion, frustrate you?
Collier: I think luckily, it's changed so much. Everything is sort of open right now. But I just want to go back to androgyny for a second, because I think for me, it's always connected to men in a way. There's a David Bowie situation. It always starts in my mind with a beautiful man who is so beautiful that he almost looks like a woman. For me, that's a kind of target of androgyny, and so it is always wrapped up in beauty in my mind. And the only reason I care if it's a boy or a girl is because I'm drawn to a beautiful face. I think the challenge that androgyny poses is a confusion for people – which is good. And going back to Gucci, in a way it's good to confuse people to open up their

recycling a cliché off the back of your family history; it's actually just two women playing with picture-making and clothes.
Charlotte: Exactly. And the option of wearing a lace little dress or big, masculine trousers is the fun part of dressing up for me anyway.
Collier: I keep thinking, 'I should just take a picture of her in that shirt, because it's like a girl's shirt'. But it doesn't look that girly on you – clothes don't wear you.

Collier, why are you interested in transforming Charlotte's appearance?
Collier: I'm not sure I've actually transformed her appearance. I think I've just focused on ideas of how I think she thinks she looks. The sides that we've played with are there. It's only that

that was real in me, and not just being an object of fantasy. I wanted to be a part of creating that fantasy while being connected to my feminine side, my soft side, and not just trying to force something just to surprise people. I don't like the idea of being stuck in a box.
Collier: I also think it's also important that, like you said, you're creating. That's what happens on a shoot: I'm looking, and thinking, and talking, and I have certain ideas about what happens if you sit down, or what happens when you stand up, but it's you who is actually in control of creating the action, and opening up a character for me. Everybody is exposed in a picture, but then everybody has this sort of safety that it's *just* a picture. There's a real beautiful push-and-pull of vulnerability under the protection of 'Oh, it's a shoot'. But

one of the reasons I really love fashion photography is because there is this potential to play with characters that can feel dangerous or troubling. That has to do with sexuality, making pictures that feel. I'm thinking about Balthus.[5] And that little bed that we were shooting on, and how Charlotte goes from being a grown-up in a silk suit, to all of sudden the shorts and the socks. For a second, I felt like a voyeur.

You felt like Balthus for a second.
Collier: I did. But knowing what the other photographs were, and the way you were in them is what made me feel comfortable to do that, and I feel it was the same for you.

Collier, you've spoken in the past about the struggle between photographer and subject. What did you mean by that?
Collier: If I think about my initial pictures with German kids who didn't speak any English, and I didn't speak much German, there was always a sense of me as somebody who wanted something from somebody who wasn't sure

what I wanted. That's my initial experience with photography. When I started, and the beginnings of shoots were hard, I would think, 'Oh, well, this is just not going to work, and it'll be over soon, and I'll be sad, and I'll go home'. As I got more practised, I realized that the introduction stage, like any relationship, is worth working through. The end result is worth working towards. It's worth figuring out who you are around that person, who that person can be with you, and then making it.
Charlotte: So you like to collaborate?
Collier: I make a lot of room for people to say, 'I want to play with it, but I want to play with it my way'. I can be a top or a bottom. I can follow a subject or I can dominate, but I'm only interested in dominating if that's desired. And I think we really kind of danced around, and it's really unique, this process, because I've never taken pictures with somebody where we were talking about the concepts the entire shoot. In a way, it's kind of like an art project where there's no naivety. You're not going to just see what happens, you know what you're getting into, and you actually

have the discussion to strengthen your ideas. I think it's important for someone who's being photographed to be responsible for the pictures, too.
Charlotte: You have to trust the photographer, but also let yourself be transported by things you couldn't predict or control – by feeling. Otherwise, you're just letting them project their own fantasies on you, and where's the surprise in that? I've always suffered from that, and at some point you have to be able to create fantasy *and* reality.
Collier: I think that we can't lose sight of the idea that the excitement of taking a picture of somebody often comes from having seen other pictures. For me, I didn't bring a fantasy I had based on other pictures I'd seen of you or your family. I just thought, 'That's somebody that I want to make a picture of', because that's somebody that I want to know. When you are a public figure, and a woman who is considered beautiful and treated as an object of beauty, it's a kind of cage, and every photoshoot is either another lock on that cage or a way to open up the door. You just can't know which until it's finished.

1. 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.' This phrase by pioneering French feminist Simone de Beauvoir is at the heart of her thesis defining an essential difference between sex and gender. It was published in her landmark 1949 book, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*).

2. One of those New York clothing-based languages was the hanky code, believed to have begun in the 1970s, in which the colour of a handkerchief placed visibly in a back trouser pocket signalled a person's sexual interests. For example, a black hanky meant an interest in S&M. Which pocket the handkerchief was in announced whether the wearer preferred to be the active (left) or passive partner (right).

3. In the 1980s, Boy George (George O'Dowd) was the lead singer of British band Culture Club and known for what was, at the time, called "gender-bending" clothing and behaviour.

4. Charlotte's aunt is Princess Stéphanie of Monaco, the youngest of Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly's three children.

5. Balthus (1908-2001) or Balthasar Klossowski de Rola was a Polish-French artist now perhaps best known for his disturbing figurative paintings of pubescent girls.

BALENCIAGA

‘The shoes do the talking.’

Stepping out with Fabrizio Viti, the discreet but daring shoe designer behind *everyone* (like Gucci, Prada, Helmut Lang, Louis Vuitton…).

By Pamela Golbin
Portrait by Thomas Lohr
Photograph by Thibault Montamat

There's nothing showy about Fabrizio Viti. A perfect combination of elegance and classic Italian class, the shoe designer has spent more than two decades creating styles as avant-garde as they are popular. Since graduating from fashion school in 1991, he has worked and learned, and been an inspiration behind the scenes at the biggest French and Italian houses. This steady climb to the pinnacle of fashion has seen him create shoes for the likes of Tom Ford, Miuccia Prada, Helmut Lang, and, at Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacobs, and most recently, Nicolas Ghesquière.

Thoughtful and warm, Fabrizio Viti recently invited us to discuss his new side project. After designing thousands of different styles for other labels (and selling millions of pairs of them), he has just released his first collection under his own name. In his typically Parisian apartment, we discussed this new step, the passion that drives him and how work – whether at Vuitton or for himself – remains a thrilling creative process. After happily spending so long as the preferred translator of the best contemporary designers' visions – trilingual, he is as happy in English or French as his native Italian – it now feels natural that Viti should want to speak using his own design language. Fabrizio Viti is finally ready to step out into the spotlight. Which, it turns out, is where he has always deserved to be.

Pamela Golbin: When did you become interested in fashion?
Fabrizio Viti: In school. I first wanted to be a fashion designer when I was seven or eight, but I had no conception of what a designer was or I don't even think I had any idea of what fashion was. My notion of a fashion designer was very confused until the middle 1980s when Gianni Versace, Gianfranco Ferré and Giorgio Armani became the legends they are now.

For me, fashion was more about female beauty, mostly what I saw on the TV with my mother who always showed me Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe movies. Actually, it was kind of strange. I remember looking at the movies and wondering why the actresses didn't look like the girls I was seeing on the street. I remember Lauren Bacall with the big shoulders and I was like, 'Why don't women look like that?' And then, of course, I had my two sisters and all of my female cousins.

In the 1970s, I was extremely influenced by the new TV shows. *Charlie's Angels* aired and all of a sudden you saw these beautiful girls, and they had like eight costume changes. The first season they were very sporty; later they became more glamorous. Then there was *Dynasty* at some point, which is not such a great reference, but at least it was a showcase of what was going on in fashion. I don't know if it was fashion, or the idea of fashion that they had. But at least there was a vision that women could have lots of clothes, and they would change quite a lot and so needed new ones.

You started your studies at art school in Carrara?[1]
Yes, because I was born there and as you know, it is the Italian city of marble. Basically, when you're young in Carrara, you have to go to art school, or otherwise you won't do anything! And then after that, I went to Marangoni.[2]

Were you already interested in designing accessories?
I always loved shoes, because they are objects; they are sculptures. They stand by themselves and they carry the weight of the person who wears them. I don't want to say they are more real because clothes are also real, but they have a function, which for me is interesting. They also change and transform the way you walk and give you a certain kind of attitude and more centimetres, which is a blessing for everyone. And men cannot do that! There is something magical about stepping into a shoe and growing 10 centimetres.

Your schooling in late 1980s and the early 1990s coincides with a pivotal moment in fashion. There's the arrival in Paris of the Belgians and the beginning of a new movement, Minimalism.
It was a turning point for accessories. Also, the prices of shoes were lower than those of clothing, making it much easier to buy a pair of shoes or a pair of sunglasses. I arrived at a very, very interesting moment. It was not easy to understand at the time, but at one moment you began to see those black nylon backpacks from Prada on the streets and everybody starting to wear more black. I guess it was a reaction to the Versace aesthetics, the *Dynasty* world in a way. For me, it was also very exciting because the 1960s influences were very prominent; if you remember, there were the Prada campaigns: Steven Meisel with Linda Evangelista and Meghan Douglas and the chairs and little flowers.[3] Minimal could be boring, but it could also be very glamorous as well. So it was a good moment to begin.

'Everybody started wearing more black in the 1990s, and those black nylon Prada backpacks. I guess it was a reaction against that whole *Dynasty* world.'

We're now in 1991.
I started working for a studio in Milan. There were still studios working for different brands then. They asked me to do more accessories than ready-to-wear. I embraced it and started working on shoes in the studio that was collaborating with smaller brands. That is where I met Fabio Zambernardi,[4] who today is my best friend. Patrick Cox[5] was a friend of Fabio's and was looking for an assistant. I started working with him and that was a real turning point. Up until then, I was designing quite a lot, but with Patrick, I was going to the factory in the south of Italy and spending a week at a time there. I learned how to make it happen from sketches to reality. The collections were big. There was the Patrick Cox line, men's and women's, about 80 styles each, and there was also Wannabe.[6] It was intense, but not like today. And we were doing bags, as well. I enjoyed those years.

In 1998, you are called by Gucci.
At the time, I was very excited to be in the same room as Tom Ford and Carine Roitfeld who was always wearing a black pencil skirt and stiletto heels. The first show I worked on with Tom Ford was Spring/Summer 1999, what we called the *Hippie* collection. It was super successful and also my first experience of a major show. After all the years spent in factories, Gucci was my first step into the glamorous world of fashion.

Gucci was known for very aggressive high heels, but that season, Tom wanted to do something different. So the heel was very, very small, round and embroidered. It had a very Indian feeling. You know, that fabric with little mirrors? He was looking for that effect. We were already set up in the Corso Venezia showroom in Milan, which meant the show was five days away. The problem was that we couldn't find the fabric. I had an idea and asked Tom to lend me his driver. It was pouring with rain and I went to all of the Indian restaurants in the Porta Venezia area of Milan. It took me a while, but I finally found the fabric. It was covering the wall of a restaurant. I calculated the measurements and said, 'Yeah, we can do one pair of boots'. But the owner couldn't understand what I wanted. I tried to explain to him that if he took the fabric from the wall, I would pay him for it! All the while I was calling the people at Gucci asking, 'How much can I pay?' And they were like, 'Whatever! Just get it!' Finally, he agreed to sell, took it down and dusted it. I rushed back. It was all multicoloured with little mirrors. Two days later, it came back from the factory as these beautiful boots.

'Tom Ford lent me his driver and I went to all of the Indian restaurants in Milan until I finally found the right fabric. It was covering the wall of a restaurant.'

During the fitting a few days later, Tom comes to me with the boots and says, 'Fabrizio, can we dye them black?' And that was the beginning of 'Fabrizio, can we…?' Since then 'Fabrizio, can we…?' has become like a leitmotif. I was like, 'Sure'. I took brush and the paint and one day later they were black. It was the beginning of a certain kind of attitude, which I keep today, where everything is possible. If you cannot find it there, you will find it somewhere else.

You only stayed for a few seasons?
I was not ready for the politics of a brand like that.

And in 1999, you started working at Prada.
I was very, very close to Fabio and Prada had always been my dream. At the time, Prada was not what it is today. There were harsh reactions towards the collections. And that was very exciting to me, to be honest. We were like the cool ones. I started working with Fabio who I consider to be the best shoe designer in history. He changed what we do today both in catwalk and commercial collections. He changed the perception of shoes by mixing rubber soles on heels, romantic heels on ugly structures, pushing boundaries. It was about mixing up a sort of emotional state, from hard to sweet and romantic at the same time. He took elements from sportier shoes from Prada Sport. If today, Dior is doing embroidered sneakers, it is because of Prada, of course. Fabio drastically changed the way we look at shoes. They finally became independent of the clothing.

It was always Fabio at Prada. The heart of the Prada shoes is Fabio, not me. Fabio was like me now at Vuitton. He is very humble, but also super tough, and he knows what he wants. I learned how to design, how to develop an idea and how to do things myself. Fabio is super quick, and so talented. He has a

sort of natural approach. He always told me, 'If you don't get it right after two or three times, then just leave it, it's not going to happen'. I started to work with these huge companies, huge organizations, and you have to go through a certain process. Fabio taught me how to get to the result faster.

Can you give us an example?
Take the leather flowers I just did for the first collection of my own brand, *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*: cut the leather, do the sample yourself and then show it. Done.

Instead of …
Waiting. And this is very important. Instead of waiting and complaining, just do it yourself. To me, how to do it is part of my job. I sketch very well, and I can cut things so that I can give the factory a sample of what I want. I don't work through visual references and I don't use my iPhone. I think someone who does my job has to be capable of making the prototypes themselves.

You also worked closely with Patrizio Bertelli, the Prada CEO.
As we know, Bertelli has an intense personality, but a genius vision. His mind is always working. He is constantly talking, pushing you to do things. He always said to me, 'Do it. If it's wrong we will see it later'. And that is what I do now. It is really, really helpful. It is better to have something in front of you even if it is not exactly what you were hoping for. As a shoe designer, I am talking about sculptural objects so I need to have them in front of me.

And with Mrs. Prada?
Fabio and I were working with Mrs. Prada, who was herself wonderful. She has a vision of things that is not what you see.

What was the process like with her?
The process was the same as with Tom, Marc and now, Nicolas. You sit down and you talk, then you focus on what you want to do. You go to the factory and you put together the heels and the shape, the inspiration, and the materials. And then you correct the samples.

But Mrs. Prada's brain works in a different dimension, so it was very interesting to hear what she was thinking, which was not necessarily what you were looking at. Sometimes she would give us an example of something that was not really there, but you could picture it in your mind. For me the biggest difference with other houses was that Prada was a family-owned business. Miuccia Prada *is* Prada. So we went straight to the source who was right in front of us.

How different were the visions of Miuccia Prada and Tom Ford?
Well, Mrs. Prada tried all of the shoes on herself. She is a perfect size 37. Everything that we did with her was mostly for herself and revolved around what she liked and what she thought she could wear or not. Tom had a specific vision of a sexy woman.

And the dynamic between her and her husband, Patrizio Bertelli?
She was the creative side and he was the more business side, even though he is a very creative person as well. There was genuine and intelligent friction between them, even though sometimes because we were all Italians, it was pushed to the extreme. It was constructive, but extreme.

Helmut Lang was bought by Prada in 1999 and you started working on its shoe line as well.
While I was working with Fabio on the Prada line, I was also doing the shoes for Lang which was a completely opposite aesthetic. There was also Melanie Ward[7] and Christian Nissen.[8] We worked in a basement deciding for three hours if the dark brown was better than black. At one point, I was like, 'I can do both. We've been on this for 28 minutes, can we move on!' It was very minimal at the time as opposed to Prada. For Helmut Lang we were doing the little slingback with the elastic. People weren't ready. I remember when I showed my first collection for them, the sales people didn't want to sell it. They kept saying, 'What is that?' I had to explain. Flesh-coloured, with a little heel, no details, conservative shapes with strange twists. Slowly, it became a sort of success.

Do you think about the form or the function of a shoe?
I see both. It is very simple for me because I do the outline of the shoe, so that means I draw a foot, or a leg if it is a boot. And then I play around with the volumes I know have to be there. If you look at what we did with Marc, the shoes are kind of crazy, but the construction is very classic. Now with Nicolas, he is very aware that the shoes have

'Mrs. Prada tried all the shoes on herself. She's a perfect size 37. Everything we did with her was for herself and revolved around what she liked.'

Left: Louis Vuitton by Nicolas Ghesquière
Right: Fabrizio Viti

to be worn. I don't want women to suffer and I want to celebrate women.

Given the close working relationship you had at Prada, why did you finally leave in 2004?
It was a transitional moment. I was very happy at Prada, but it was very, very tense. I remember standing outside the Louis Vuitton store one day and thinking the only brand that could make me leave Prada would be Louis Vuitton. But I knew they already had a super-cool shoe designer.

Delphine Arnault[9] was looking for people and a headhunter called me and said, 'Do you want to meet her?' and I said, 'Yes, of course'. I saw her and showed her some sketches. I met Yves Carcelle,[10] and I was more and more into the idea that maybe there could be a change. It was kind of dramatic because I was very close to Fabio, and still am. I finally saw Marc[11] on a Sunday afternoon. He had a good feeling about me and said, 'For me it's done – we can work together'. It was hard for me to leave Prada.

With Marc we had an immediate connection because I know every single movie from the 1960s and 1970s, every TV show, as well as all of the singers from back then. Having the same pop culture made it super easy between us. Marc comes from a showbiz family. His uncle was Donna Summer's first agent when she arrived from Europe.[12] So since day zero with Marc there was a sort of communication that was very easy and fluid.

The shoes for the Vuitton *Richard Prince* collection from Spring-Summer 2008 exemplifies the work you did with Marc Jacobs.
We wanted to do a pump, but we had to find a way to decorate it and decided to used embroideries from Lesage.[13] When they arrived Marc had the idea of cutting them up, kind of destroying the samples. It was three days before the show and we put all 30 prototypes in a line. That's when Marc said, 'OK, the right foot will be different from the left one'. Imagine! We had to take the elements from the left foot and change them around for the right foot, and then we had to explain this to the factory! You should have seen the confusion when we had to ship the shoes. Nobody knew which one went with the other! Of course, the base was the same colour, but when you do 500 pairs of shoes, it can be very confusing.

Drama seems to be a crucial element of the creative process at this moment?
We needed drama to achieve Marc's vision – it was as if we were setting up a Broadway show. They were pushing him to do the most extravagant fashion shows, which were really massive productions.

How did you deal with these last-minute decisions with Marc?
That's just the way it was. Our fashion show was always scheduled at 10 in the morning. That was the final goal; how we got there was our business. It took a lot of energy, but that was the way he was working and my duty was to follow him. I never questioned it – the show just had to go on. *Basta*. Donna Summer once told me about gluing her clothes together just before going on stage at a concert where there were 20,000 people waiting for her. You do what you need to do, and then you forget and go on to the next. It was the same situation with Marc.

The shoes for the Spring/Summer 2009 Louis Vuitton *African* collection were probably that the most complex designs you've ever made.
Those shoes were very difficult because of the numbers of elements used and also because of the number of variations. We had so many details, so many different elements that it was overwhelming. We made close to 300 pairs of shoes in four days. Don't ask me why. Everything was multiplied.

There was no trip to Africa, nothing. We were sitting at the office and thinking about how Africa was perceived in 1920s Paris and evoking women of the time like Josephine Baker. We had a shoe where there was this gap between where the heel sat and the heel itself and it looked like a fish's mouth. Marc didn't like it. We ended up having to go to an airplane factory to make sure that the steel in the heel could hold the weight of the girls. Each heel cost something like €70 each, which I think is the most expensive heel in history!

Marc's tenure lasted close to 15 years before Nicolas Ghesquière replaced him in November 2013. How was the transition?
The years with Marc were difficult and intense, but absolutely wonderful. My contract finished the same season as his, but of course I knew that his replacement was a designer I really admired.

'With Marc, the shoes were kind of crazy, but the construction was very classic. Now with Nicolas, he is very aware that the shoes have to be worn.'

I felt that it was worth it to wait and not get nervous. Although the company wanted to keep me there, it was tough because Julie de Libran[14] left and so did Katie Grand. It was a big change in the structure.

I had always loved Nicolas' work and his shoes were amazing, so I thought it would be a great challenge to work with him. Anyway, if there is no change then it is not fashion. It was the beginning of a new era. The creative vision is based more on a real woman than the fantasy of a woman. We still work in the same way, but the references are very, very French whereas before they were very American. It's more Isabelle Adjani than Barbra Streisand. Nicolas is very intelligent and grateful. This is the first time that I work with a grateful person, which means that he understands the effort that everybody puts in. It's unique.

How do you balance going with the flow with imposing your vision?
I never impose my vision. For the shows, we create characters and it is the designer who has the full vision. For me, it's like an episode of a TV series. Although I do a lot, my role is to make the designer's vision real and wearable. I have so much liberty and so much space to do it. Designers don't impose things on me at all and I never impose things to them, unless it is technical.

How different is the design process for the fashion-show collection as opposed to the commercial collection?
For the catwalk collection, I work with Nicolas. We sit down together and we follow this idea of creating a sort of character for a show. We have to focus on a certain kind of heroine who could live in a certain atmosphere and carry off these kinds of clothes, shoes and bags. It is a very directional trip, but then it becomes a reality because with Nicolas, the shoes are very grounded: they are super creative, but in their structure and their balance they are very real. With the commercial collection, you have to consider so many different necessities that I work with a marketing team; I need to know what is selling and not in the stores. It is like for a major record label. You cannot please everybody; you have to accept it is not popular, and try to make something for different women.

What is the first thing you look at when you see a shoe?
The heel. Definitely the heel, because it changes the body's posture and how we walk. I look at both the height and the shape. I check the height of the shoe women are wearing because when you see really high heels on the catwalk or in the commercial collection, I just ask how can you walk in them in everyday life? And I am interested in the shape because I want to see what somebody else has done.

Is there a part of the foot that anchors your designs?
The arch. When I see the foot, I see the arch for both men and women. I look at the curved line of the foot, which has always reminded me of a church or a chapel. Because I like the arch of a naked foot, I always pay a lot of attention to the instep of the shoes. I hate when there is too great a distance from the inside of the heel to the instep. In my designs, I always try and reduce that distance as much as possible.

The first naked foot you remember seeing was Barbie's…
I started playing with Barbie when I was four, and since then there has not one day in my life that I have been without a Barbie in my hands. I started my collection when I could afford the vintage Barbies, which means in the 1990s.

How many do you have now?
I think I have 500, maybe even more.

Does Barbie inspire you in your work?
Sure, and it is not only about the doll, but also about the leaflets and the whole universe that Mattel produced with great design and packaging. They were amazing, the most beautiful things I ever saw. It is also a reference, the representation of the object itself that can leave you with lots more imagination.

And her shoes were particularly influential in the development of your skills…
I've had an attraction for her shoes from the 1970s, like the 'rubber boots' – do you remember in that one Louis Vuitton collection?[15] And the 'square-heeled' pump. When Superstar Barbie came out and she was wearing a taller heel, I was like, 'How can she walk in these?' It was a lot of fun for me to play with the shoes and to take care of them. Inevitably, you always lose one and at some point you start to do combinations, which is exactly what we did for the show.

'The arch of the foot is what anchors my shoe designs. I look at the curved line of the foot, which has always reminded me of a church or a chapel.'

You have worked with some of the most important contemporary designers of the last two decades interpreting and translating their vision. Why did you decide last year to launch your eponymous collection?
My own collection doesn't come out of any frustration. I couldn't be freer at work. I am very fulfilled with what I am doing now, what I did in the past, and what I will do in the future. It was a sort of long, but very natural and fluid process. I am very blessed because the numbers are amazing, which made it very easy for me to choose who I wanted to work with for my own line. I decided to do this collection because I like to have fun and it is a challenge. I am finally showing my personal vision and hoping that women will like it.

It's a small collection of 16 styles but very focused. It is called *Season One* because to me it's like a TV show, like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, my favourite. I am always using contrasting elements: matte and shiny, rubber and leather, candy colours with black pipping. For now, it is a small project, but the reaction has been really, really good. We've sold almost 900 pairs, which is very good for such a small collection.

What are the keys words you would use to describe this collection?
Fun, joyful, wearable, and maybe, timeless. Shoes that you like for longer than a season. There is no 'sex is in the air', no seduction, no red carpet. They're shoes for wearing.

Very straightforward like you!
Super straightforward. It's something that I did for my friends and my love of women. My references are women aged 15 to 85. Sofia Coppola is one of my inspirations. I don't care about major exposure for myself; the shoes can do the talking. It is a very joyful collection, and I had a joyful time making it. Next season I will do something else. There is no need to over-analyse the collections.

When I work with other designers I always really enjoy working with them. It might not be my aesthetic, but my goal is brand identification. When I design for myself, it is much more fluid because I am not dealing with somebody else's taste. The direction changes when you work for yourself. There was no preconception of what I had to do so I did what I felt. It's not a goal-driven project; it's a process.

How would you define success?
Success is being able to do what you want and have people who like it. I don't care so much about compliments. My shoes are not done for a woman to seduce a man. These are not 'man-catcher' shoes. I design them for women to have fun.

You've played a part in making shoes into a multi-billion-dollar business.
I know! We created this system, this fashion system. I am definitely part of it and began really during the time I was at Prada. Why would I criticize a system that I helped create? If you are smart you can take advantage of it and continue working as a creative person, always looking for possibilities to push the limits. Those who criticise are often not part of the system. You cannot be paid by François Pinault and then talk badly about the major shows. If you don't like the system, go somewhere else. I am very proud to be part of this shoe industry that makes millions of dollars and euros – and I hope I can make millions, too. And be part of it now under my own name, why not? I have been here for 20 years; no one is forcing me to do anything. It is not that complicated. Barbra Streisand has been with Columbia Records for something like 40 years; she couldn't have done it on her own. But she did what she wanted with them because she found an agreement.

How can you justify shoes that cost several thousand dollars a pair?
I can't talk about other brands, but for Fabrizio Viti and the brands I work with, I swear to God we try to keep the prices the most real that we can. If they cost a certain amount of money, it is because of the work, the material and the time it takes to make them. At Louis Vuitton, we are constantly working within a wide range of prices to give different options. If they are expensive, then there is always a reason.

When you design something is that always in the back of your mind?
Yes, of course. As a designer, the correct way is to start from what you think could be very beautiful and then scale it down to something more approachable.

How many shoes do you design each season?
Overall, a thousand, maybe more. Three shows, pre-Fall collection, two commercial collections, and all the special projects. I do what I do because I forget; every season is like a new TV episode.

Where do you see the innovation in shoes coming from?
I am not looking for a revolution; I am not going to change the world. I am probably not going to invent a new kind of shoe. To be honest, I don't care about the new. I like the things as they are now.

One last thing, we didn't really speak about your passion for Donna Summer.
I didn't really mention her and it is so strange because she is my love. My next collection will be a tribute to her. My favourite Donna song is 'Our Love', because of the refrain: 'Our love will last forever'.

'My shoes are not designed for a woman to seduce a man. These are not 'man-catcher' shoes. I design them for women to have fun.'

1. Viti studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Carrara.

2. Giulio Marangoni founded the Istituto Artistico dell'Abbigliamente Marangoni in Milan in 1935. Over the past decade the school has expanded both its courses (to offer art and design, as well as fashion) and its locations: it now has campuses in Milan, Florence, Paris, London, Shanghai and Shenzhen.

3. The campaign was for Prada's Spring/Summer 1992 women's ready-to-wear collection.

4. Design director at Miu Miu and Prada since 2002.

5. Born in Edmonton, Canada, Patrick Cox moved to London in the 1980s and then became perhaps the most successful shoe designer of the 1990s. His Wannabe loafers were a key piece of the decade's fashion landscape and at the height of their popularity Cox was selling 1 million pairs a year. He sold his label in 2007, which left him contractually unable to design shoes for three years. He began working with Geox in 2011 and in 2015, launched Lathbridge (his middle name), a new brand making "Italian-made shoes and leather goods for men and women".

6. Victoria Beckham told a New York audience in 2015 that she used her first Spice Girls pay cheque to buy a pair of Wannabes.

7. Stylist Melanie Ward began working in 1980s London, often collaborating with photographers Corinne Day and David Sims. She styled Day's 'The Third Summer of Love' story in the July 1990 issue of *The Face*, which is widely credited with launching the career of the then-15-year-old Kate Moss. In the 1990s, she became stylist and muse to Helmut Lang, a partnership that lasted for 13 years.

8. Christian Nissen was Helmut Lang's studio manager at the time.

9. Delphine Arnault was then on the board of Louis Vuitton's parent company LVMH. Since 2013, she has been executive vice president at Louis Vuitton.

10. Yves Carcelle was then in charge of fashion and leather goods at Louis Vuitton. He died in 2014.

11. Marc Jacobs was creative director at Louis Vuitton between 1997 and 2013.

12. Born in Boston in 1948, Donna Summer left the US in 1968 to take up a part in a German production of *Hair*. She ended up in Munich where she met producers Giorgio Moroder and Pete Bellotte. Together they wrote the huge 1975 hit, 'Love to Love You Baby', and Summer returned to the US, becoming the figurehead of the new disco movement. She is said to have distanced herself from the song's famously erotic moans after she became a born-again Christian in 1979. She died of lung cancer in 2012.

13. Paris-based embroiderers Lesage have been working with fashion houses since 1924. They been part of Chanel's Métiers d'art network of artisans since 2002.

14. Julie de Libran joined Louis Vuitton from Prada in 2008. She took over as creative director at Sonia Rykiel in May 2014.

15. Autumn/Winter 2011 women's ready-to-wear.

‘Come into the shop, try it on, touch the fabric, and talk to somebody.’

Colette founder Sarah Andelman and Dover Street Market boss Adrian Joffe on why the bricks-and-mortar experience is irreplaceable.

By Jonathan Wingfield
Illustrations by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

It was 1997. There was a Clinton in the White House, a Chirac in the Élysées Palace, and, not far away at 213 Rue Saint-Honoré, Sarah Andelman and her mother, Colette Rousseaux, in a soon-to-open store. When it did, on March 18, 1997, Colette changed shopping in Paris forever. Not only by redefining what a store should and could do – create, not capture, the Zeitgeist – but also by spearheading a transformation of Rue Saint-Honoré from ordinary, if centrally located Parisian neighbourhood into the city's new nexus of luxury shopping.

While buying for the store, Andelman had approached Comme des Garçons CEO Adrian Joffe to see if he would allow her to stock the hallowed label designed by Comme creative head (and his wife), Rei Kawakubo. He saw the promise, said yes, and the label continues to be stocked today. Then, in 2004, the Comme couple decided it was their turn to create a 'multiverse' and opened Dover Street Market in London. Inspired both by Colette and legendary London 'independent-trader' hubs like Kensington Market, their vision brought together luxury and streetwear, rare books and perfume, coffee and watches. They have since spread the DSM concept to Tokyo, Beijing and New York, while the original Dover Street Market has recently upped sticks and moved half a mile across central London to Haymarket. Andelman, however, has refused to expand beyond her Paris base, figuring that those who can't get to Paris can shop online.

Because in the 20 years since Colette opened, there has been another revolution. In the past decade, online retailers like Net-A-Porter and YOOX have created globalized virtual luxury worlds and opened new frontiers in retail. For some, this growth in fashion e-commerce brought into question the continuing existence – and even point – of old-fashioned bricks-and-mortar retailers. Why make people come to the products when the products can come to the consumer?

In reality, however, the digital revolution has, if anything, actually proved the value of stores such as Colette and Dover Street Market. Because in today's market, offering products is the easy bit; what's also needed is the intelligence, sensitivity and confidence to choose the right ones, and present them in new and exciting ways. In a world of always-on, instantaneously available pleasures, selection is differentiation, curation is distinction. And with that comes a shared shopping experience, a communal moment.

So on a sunny late-summer afternoon, we brought Andelman and Joffe together to talk retail today, the blending of the virtual and physical, brands and ideas, and streetwear and luxury, in the place where it all began: 213 Rue Saint-Honoré. Colette.

Let's start with an obvious question – what is your definition of a good shopping experience?

Sarah Andelman: If you know what you're looking for, then a good shopping experience is one where you'll find that thing, your size is in stock, the experience is quick and efficient, and you leave a happy customer. But just looking around can be the best shopping experience. I love the idea that people come into Colette convinced they won't buy anything, but then discover something unexpected and can't resist. We have so many different products and options that anybody coming in just out of curiosity can fall in love with the music or the in-store fragrance or a new pair of sneakers.

Adrian Joffe: When we started Dover Street Market, we didn't want it to be a Comme des Garçons flagship store. We thought we'd try something new that would give people a reason to leave the house, because bricks and mortar – actual physical places – are fundamental to the survival of shopping. Then Rei and I started thinking about markets like Kensington Market,[1] which we'd always loved, because the energy of the marketplace is so exciting. The idea of everybody staying at home and buying everything they need online is very melancholic, very depressing. As Sarah says, it's about offering something to discover, an adventure, some excitement. People can spend all day at Colette or Dover Street Market, or just pop in to buy their favourite perfume.

What about your own experiences of shopping? Do you have particular childhood memories of a market or a shop?

Sarah: I remember, in the late 1980s, early 1990s, my mother taking me on a pilgrimage every Saturday to Comme des Garçons on Rue Étienne Marcel. Everything about it was amazing: the store design, the clothes, the staff.

Adrian: Wow, was that really your first memory of shopping?

Sarah: Well, the very first was like everyone else's: buying colourful candies at the *boulangerie* before or after school. But as a teenager, before I moved into Paris, we would come to Étienne Marcel, Rue du Jour, the agnès b. store, because the suburban shopping experience where I lived at the time was limited to Parly 2.[2] I was probably the only kid at my school who knew about Comme.

Adrian: My parents had no idea about fashion. My mum would just take me to Marks & Spencer or Selfridge's food hall in London. But I remember getting a little interested in fashion when I was about 14 or 15; there were a few Italian shops on the Fulham Road, and I remember going in this tiny multi-brand store and seeing a ripped jumper with a suede elbow and dreaming of one day being able to afford it. And when I actually went in and bought it, it was very, very exciting. But these days I don't 'go shopping', in that sense.

Sarah: The shop where I now spend the most time is Amazon! I'm as thrilled as anyone else when things arrive 48 hours later; I find it fantastic. Adrian, were you serious when you said you no longer do any physical shopping?

Adrian: I still like to browse in bookshops. When I travel for work, I'll make a point of popping into all our stores, and the multi-brand stores that buy us, too. But in terms of actual shopping, I do it all at Comme des Garçons. Anything we don't sell – like underpants, or swimwear and so on – I just buy online.

It's ironic that you used the term 'browse', because it's one that's long been appropriated by the digital world.

Adrian: It's a nice term, and I think the notion of browsing, in places like Colette, is really important. Life can be very lowest-common-denominator these days; you're almost told what to get, what's in, what's now, what's trendy, and you don't really decide for yourself. There is less autonomy, less self-generation of your own expression, and that is why browsing is perhaps more important than ever. I think Colette and Dover Street do that in different ways, but we both give people options and alternatives. I think it would be very sad if that all went away.

Sarah, you made shopping on Amazon sound like a guilty pleasure. Why are online shopping experiences seen as soulless, whereas buying, say, one-off slippers in a Tangier souk, has become this almost mythical and fetishized 'authentic experience'?

Sarah: For sure, online shopping is less interesting because it is experienced behind a screen as opposed to real life. But I'd say any feelings of guilt probably come from the fact that my life at Colette has always been about showing how the bricks-and-mortar experience is irreplaceable, and a model that will continue forever. We're not proud to buy online, but today it's vital; there are some things we can't even get in physical shops anymore, so you can't fight it, you have to go with it.

Adrian: Maybe one feels guilty about denying oneself the chance of that authentic memory in the souk, but I don't think anyone really feels *that* guilty about online shopping.

Sarah: It's funny that you mention slippers in Tangier souks. I went there and found these wonderful little orange-blossom perfumes. We're really proud to be selling something that normally you would have to go to a market in Tangier to get.

Adrian: If customers know that story, and know the origins, then I think they can at least glean some kind of pleasure. That is what it's about, providing that service.

Sarah, talk us through the events that led up to you opening Colette in 1997.

Sarah: I was studying art history and my mother had her shop in the Sentier,[3] but she had always wanted us to work together. We moved into an apartment in the very same building we're in now, and every day we would walk past the empty white space on the ground floor, which was for sale.

How was the neighbourhood around here at the time?

Sarah: Very different then; typical neighbourhood shops like the butcher, the fishmonger, a news stand. The fashion stores stopped before you got to Rue Royale and Place Vendôme, just after Hermès on Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. And then at the opposite end, you had Les Halles, but right here was a bit of a no man's land, with nothing apart from, ironically, the Comme des Garcon offices on Place Vendôme! How come you ended up there?

Adrian: Somebody recommended that space on Place Vendôme when we first came to Paris. For Rei, a Japanese woman coming to visit, we had to be in the

'The idea of everybody staying at home and buying everything they need online is very melancholic, very depressing.'

'The shop where I now spend the most time is Amazon. I admit that I'm just as thrilled as anyone else when things arrive 48 hours later.'

very heart of town, not somewhere in the 18th or the 11th *arrondissement*. That was very important. Was it important for you to be in the centre?

Sarah: We didn't really ask ourselves the question; we just visited the space and fell in love with it, and the way the light filled it. Mum immediately had the idea that I should present exhibitions and show young designers here. Paris was pretty quiet at the time and we loved the idea of bringing different worlds together in this one space. The slogan at the start was 'styledesignartfood', and it was vital that we didn't limit ourselves to a single domain. The other main intention was for continuous renewal.

Did this idea seem at odds with what was happening in Paris at the time?

present were things we couldn't find in Paris at the time. I always use the example of the beauty brand Kiehl's,[4] which was only sold in New York back then, in the original store run by the family. We'd just think to ourselves, 'Why isn't that stuff sold in Paris?' The same thing occurred everywhere – a pair of Reeboks or a G-Shock watch that you could only find in Tokyo. So there was always this sense of excitement when we travelled to New York or London or wherever, and saw products that we'd bring back to Paris.

This leads into my next question about curating. The word 'curate' actually comes from the Latin word *curare*, which means 'to take care of', but today, curating is more a question of expressing an opinion or an identity

on. I can look and choose, I select and then I follow up the arrival in store. I make sure that it is well presented and well integrated into the shop, and then I wish it a good life! I'm simplifying, but that is pretty much what I do.

How would you define the selection process?

Sarah: Colette is like a puzzle that needs the right pieces to fall into place, or like a cocktail with the right ingredients. That's the impression I have of what I do: I choose and edit things from a thousand different brands and places, and it's about getting the right puzzle, because every single little product in the store is there for a reason.

So the physical mix is as important as the selection.

'I choose everything for Colette myself. We are not like a department store where there's a team of 15 people analysing footwear sales on big charts.'

Sarah: Right from the start, there were people who followed us, and others who were like, '*Oh là là*, it'll never work; they'll close in two years'. As I mentioned, not a lot was happening in Paris at the time; the interesting stuff was in London, with people like McQueen and Hussein Chalayan.

Adrian: There really was nothing like Colette in Paris; there was nothing like it anywhere.

Sarah: Adrian, I don't know if you remember us coming to see you. We must have been so young, probably only 19, I think. I don't know what you thought, but for us, having Comme was a really, really big deal.

Adrian: It all felt like such a new thing, and I recall you really wanted us there. I don't think it took long to convince me.

Sarah: So much of what we wanted to

through the act of selecting and assembling choices. I presume many people consider your work at DSM and Colette to be a form of curating…

Sarah: The term that used to be thrown around a lot – less so now – was 'concept store'. I used to hear that all the time and would find it rather patronising, whereas curating is associated with galleries and museums, which I find quite chic! It is genuinely what I do. Twenty years ago when we'd select pieces from Comme des Garçons, and now when we discover an artist in a gallery or products from beauty brands we've come across.

Is it all you as an individual?

Sarah: It really is me who does it; we are not like a department store where they'll be a team of 15 people analysing their footwear sales on big charts and so

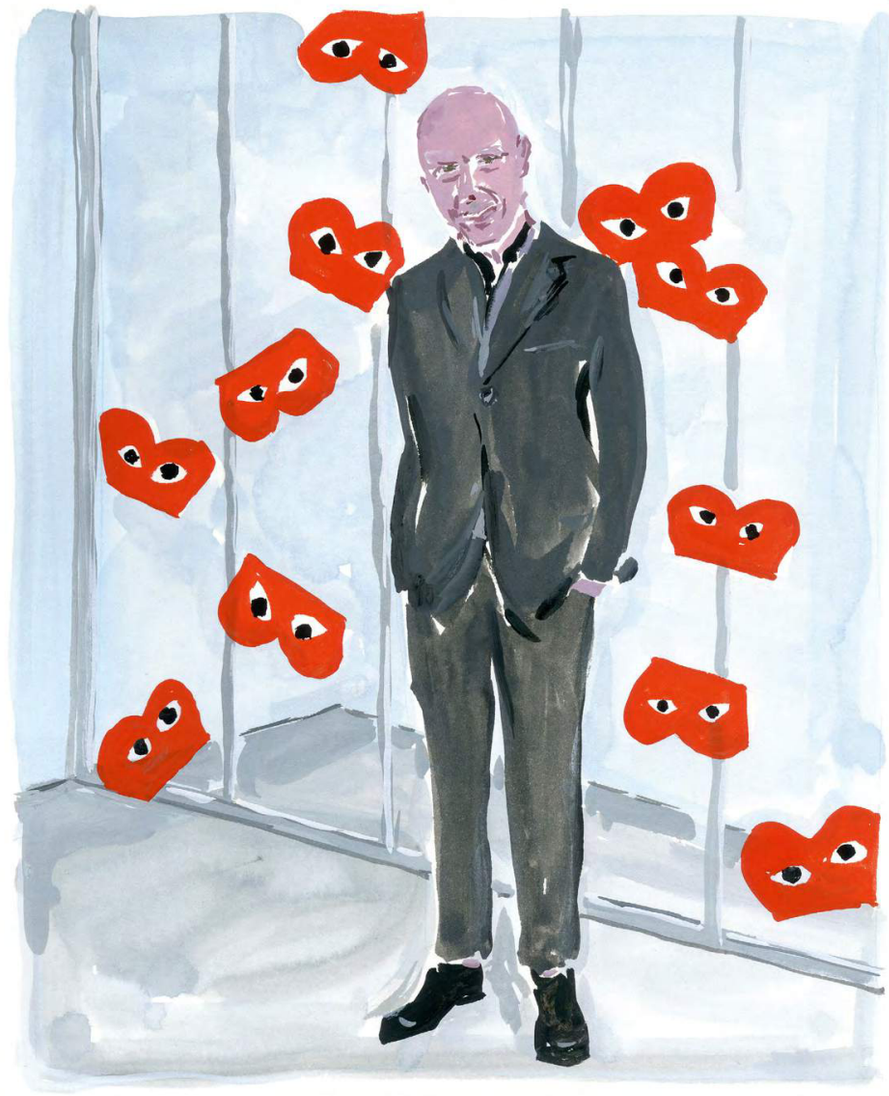
Sarah: That is what differentiates us from the department stores, where you have a brand with its *corner* [concession stand]. One of the essential differences between Colette and Dover Street Market is that we mix everyone up – say, Comme des Garçons, Gucci, Simone Rocha – and every week we change that mix, to create new associations. So everything has to go together, even if it's only us who notices it.

Would you say you actively look for trends?

Sarah: I don't know what trends are; I think I just manage to capture an *air du temps*.

Adrian: Do you ever get anything you don't like because you think it's the right thing to do for your customers?

Sarah: No. Never. What about you?



Adrian: Oh, there's *loads* of stuff I don't like in my shops! [Laughs] I mean, we work with a team now, and there are four big shops and I sometimes get defeated. I'll be like, 'There is no way I am having that shit', and they all say, 'Yeah, but it's going to sell well, and it's cute and nice', and so I end up saying, 'Alright, if you insist'. It's a bit looser than with Sarah; Sarah really is one eye. She is the same as Rei. That's why Rei has a heart attack when she comes into Dover Street because there are loads of things that she'll look at and say, 'What's that doing here? What did you get that for? Why did they put that chair there?'

Nonetheless, I get the impression that Dover Street Market is very much your baby.
Adrian: Ten or 12 years ago there was less going on, so Rei would help me more with Dover Street Market. These days she just takes care of the visuals and building up the design elements; we try to keep her informed of all the other content, but basically Rei has left it to me. It has become more and more my thing, which Rei finds really hard because she wants to do everything, but she *can't* do everything, and she knows that.

What about selecting of the brands?
Adrian: Whenever we can, we'll have meetings with Rei about which brands to buy and how to put them together; her instincts are always crucial and we couldn't do it without her being there behind us, like some kind of ether.

Would you say there is a big operational distinction between the Comme des Garçons stores and DSM?
Adrian: Comme des Garçons is always perfect because it is Rei's eye: every shop, every garment, everything that she does is perfect for her. But a lot of the things in Dover Street, she says, 'Why did you do that?' But that's OK because the concept of Dover Street is to make mistakes.

Dover Street Market feels less about curated products like in Colette and more about constructing a kind of marketplace in which the Comme world can exist.
Adrian: It's the same in terms of always wanting to offer new things and new juxtapositions of things. But we give a freedom of expression to people who somehow share something, some value; they all have a vision and they all have something to say. For me, that is enough, even if I don't necessarily like what it is they're saying. The clash of expressions – 'the chaos', as we like to call it – is interesting.

Would you say your role is to offer a space for the brands – regardless of their respective scale or resources – and encourage them to do something different?
Adrian: That's exactly it. Big multinational groups want to be in Dover Street because we give them a chance to express themselves differently. Every shop those big brands have might be identical, so when they come to us, we say, 'Don't spend £50,000 on your space, spend £10,000; do something small, something temporary, free yourselves up, you can change'. So they get all excited… and then just do exactly the same thing! We have to politely suggest to them that maybe there's no point them being in Dover Street. I mean, if what they're proposing is really too boring, it's not good for anyone. But that's always a hard conversation to have with some people.

You think some of those brands are missing the point?
Adrian: *Totally* missing the point. They try, they *really* try, but some just can't deconstruct, usually because there are too many suits in the way, so we part ways as amicably as possible.

Collaboration is ingrained in what brands do nowadays, especially in the digital world, and it feels like both of you have been embracing that shared experience for years.
Adrian: Rei has always said she feels lonely out there on her own, trying to do something creative. She has always had this very un-egotistical attitude and that's why she loves the idea of Dover Street because she can share the space with like-minded people, in order to present new things, new ideas.

But few people, for whatever reason – usually commercial – are able to continually create newness to the extent Comme des Garçons has.
Adrian: Rei always says, 'Why don't people work harder? Why is this the same as last year? Why does the show look the same?' But when someone does something different she *really* acknowledges that, and she is really inspired and excited by the idea of Dover Street somehow promoting new ideas. And you're right, I think we did start that idea of brands sharing a space. Fashion people in general are very protective of their own territory – you don't share things at all – and I think that has changed, partly thanks to Sarah and me, because we've opened up opportunities for so many people.

The flipside to all this shared experience is, of course, the increased need for everyone to have exclusive products, exclusive content, exclusive timeframes. How important is it to you to be selling products exclusively?
Adrian: My team really like and want exclusives, but I'm always saying, 'Look, we can't guarantee these poor brands so much money; I want to try and see how it works, and if they want to sell to other stores then that's OK'. To be honest, it's not as vital as people make out. It's not fair either.
Sarah: I agree with Adrian. A young designer won't say to us, 'We'll only sell to you'. It's up to us to get our customers to buy it from us rather than the next shop. There are lots of young designers who ask us, rather sheepishly, if they can also sell to department stores in Paris, and although I suspect people think otherwise, I always say yes.
Adrian: Me, too.

Because it's good for business?
Sarah: No, because they need to be able to develop.
Adrian: It's a fine line between protecting them and suffocating them.
Sarah: But sure, it can be good for business, too. For example, Le Labo,[5] who we've had exclusively for a long time, just opened up nearby, but we haven't stopped selling its products, because we have a loyal clientele. Although that's perhaps where beauty differs from fashion. We have lots of brands with their own boutiques in the area. It's good for them to be seen with us, and we do a massive job in terms of explaining and promoting their products to our customers. Ultimately, it's important for us too that, as a brand becomes increasingly established, it is known beyond just our walls.

People generally go to Dover Street Market for the Dover Street Market experience, not simply to shop for a particular brand or particular product.
Adrian: I think that's true.
Sarah: I think perhaps street culture is the exception. With Nike, for example, you really have the sneaker-head collectors. At Colette, sneaker launches are on Saturdays at 11am, and the sneaker-heads are already there in front of the shop; they know what's available exclusively at Colette. The day they are exclusive at NikeLab,[6] then they go to NikeLab. Thankfully we don't just have that, but in that scenario we are dependent on the brand.

What about that whole culture of people queuing outside shops to get limited editions? It feels like FOMO culture – Fear of Missing Out – has become a ubiquitous marketing device.
Adrian: Some brands certainly deal with their market like that; they control surreptitiously and it's all about reselling. I guess you just have to tread a fine line; we try to get the fans, not just the resellers, and we tell people who really love the product to come early. We know the resellers, we know who they are, but you can't stop them. It's a very interesting phenomenon and you're right, it's an important part of that world today.

Let's just go back to the subject of cohabitation within your shops. Like everything else in fashion, doesn't that become a huge political issue?
Sarah: We put everyone on the same level, whether it's Gucci or the up-and-coming designer.
Adrian: It's very egalitarian in a way.
Sarah: We've said from the beginning that we want the customer to be attracted by the clothes themselves and not by the brand. Of course, the brand is important, but what really counts is the final product in front of you. So that's why we put them all together in this sort of forced cohabitation.
Adrian: We keep the visual identity of some of the brands, but we mix everything up, too. For the first five years everyone was saying, 'This isn't going to work. Where is the menswear? Where are the shoes? Is this the expensive section? Is this the cheap department?'

Do the luxury brands have a problem with the fact you are selling £50 T-shirts around their spaces?
Adrian: Never… OK, sometimes you might get a *little* bit of friction. A classic example for me was with Supreme and Prada. When we opened Dover Street Market in New York three years ago, it came across like we had maybe bent

'Rei has a heart attack every time she comes into Dover Street because there are loads of things that she'll look at and say, 'Why did you get that?''

'Young designers ask us, rather sheepishly, if they can also sell to department stores, and although I suspect people think otherwise, I always say yes.'

the rules for Prada because their space appeared to be going round the lift, and invading about 10cm of the Supreme space. James Jebbia of Supreme[7] went absolutely ballistic: he wanted to leave, and was like, 'Why didn't you tell me Prada was coming here?' And we said, 'We don't tell anybody who's next to who, that's the whole excitement and surprise'. Ultimately, James Jebbia *loved* being next to Prada; it took him a couple of days of moaning and groaning, but he's an amazing guy because he got it in the end. I mean, Prada has gone, and it's Gucci now, and he loves Gucci even more. Similarly, others might not love being next to Supreme, but Gucci, for example, love it.

Sarah: These days, the same client would buy both Gucci and Supreme! It works for both of them.

Adrian: That is exactly what Alessandro Michele loved about being next to Supreme; the possibility of someone buying a jacket from him and a sweatshirt from Supreme. It all goes back to the idea of curating.

How well do you think you know your customers?

Sarah: When I walk through the store and see people from all horizons – including people who might have no interest in fashion but who are looking at the books or the music selection – I feel really lucky to have that diversity.

Adrian: I know our clients who come on a regular basis. What pleases me the most, like Sarah says, is seeing all the different kinds of people. I always want to get the attention of the Middle Eastern ladies, but they keep themselves to themselves; then there are the Chinese customers who I'm sadly not able to really interact with because of the language barrier. And then there's the actress Una Stubbs[8] in London, who pretty much comes every other week. Una has a browse, occasionally buys a T-shirt, comes upstairs to have a coffee and a cake, and then goes. She just loves being there. She's nearly 80 years old,[9] and is the most amazing lady, and one of my favourite clients.

Sarah: There are the people who come specifically to Colette, and others who are walking down Faubourg Saint-Honoré or have been to the Jardins des Tuileries, and just step into this bustling shop they've maybe never heard of before. When we first opened Colette I heard people say they were scared to come in because it looked so stark, like a gallery or something. But we opened the ground floor up to sell books and magazines to make it feel less intimidating, and these days you've got €1 bracelets there, too.

Sarah, how do you maintain momentum when you restrict yourself to just the one shop in Paris?

Sarah: The facade might not change, but we constantly change everything inside. If you look at photos from a couple of years ago, the tables, chairs, lighting and the way we organize the space has all changed, not to mention the displays that we change every two weeks.

Adrian: Do you realize that Sarah, herself, has done 2,000 windows at Colette? I've just done the calculation. Every week she changes the window: 52 weeks of the year times 20 years. That's one way she keeps things new. No one else in the world does that.

Sarah: We have always done those things, but people only really realize now thanks to means of communicating such as Instagram. Today, it's the turnover of the broader fashion market that is more important: how the brands now do two, four, six collections a year, and how small streetwear brands will produce new items every month. We are constantly bombarded with new products, so that rhythm of reception, sales and moving onto something else is more rapid than ever before.

In what ways are you now aware of the consumers' wishes and expectations?

Sarah: We try to meet our clients' needs, but it's good that they are more and more informed, that they know about the existing designers and brands.

Adrian: I think we've become a little the victim of our success – we've taught people to expect different things all the time. Before, they'd come in and say, 'Oh, that's different', but now it's more like, 'OK, so what's different today?' It's the treadmill that you have to stay on these days, and do it quicker or better or have more of it.

Is Rei still reluctant to engage in e-commerce?

Adrian: Yes, she doesn't like the idea of the main Comme des Garçons line being sold online because she wants people to come into the shops, try it on and touch the fabric, and talk to somebody. Our customers like Sarah all sell Comme des Garçons online – I'm not actually sure if Rei knows about that –

'James Jebbia of Supreme went absolutely ballistic: he wanted to leave Dover Street, and was like, 'Why didn't you tell me Prada was coming here?''

but we can't control that; it's too big. I mean, they could put it on a rack outside and sell it at whatever price they like; there are some things you simply cannot control. Rei has accepted the online selling of things that are perennial – like [the Comme des Garçons line] Play, the wallets and the perfume – and we've got all the other brands on our e-comm, and it's unbelievable how well it works, but it could be so much better if we sold Comme des Garçons, too.

What percentage of sales do online sales now represent for you?
Adrian: Maybe 10 percent. It's very small, but that 10 percent didn't exist before, so that's still £3 million.

Sarah?
Sarah: I don't know.
Adrian: It must be 20, 30, 40 percent?
Sarah: Yes, something like that.
Adrian: But Matches is like 95 percent. I think Ruth Chapman[10] is a genius, but what works for others doesn't always work for us.

Do you find it difficult to keep up in a system that is so governed by speed? Amazon is planning to drone deliveries, Net-A-Porter's ad campaigns are all about getting a new outfit delivered before 5pm…
Sarah: We do the best we can. If you order before midday, you can get your purchases the same day, before 7pm – that's our ParisExpress service – but we don't advertise or message it in the same way as Net-A-Porter. But we obviously have to keep up; I myself am the first person to want everything quickly.
Adrian: Personally, I don't like it. I think it's something we should resist. Why do we want instant gratification all the time? Why do we want to see something in a show and then have to have it the next day? That's why I can't stand the see-now-buy-now idea; it's not good.
Sarah: I don't know if it is instant gratification.
Adrian: It is! You want, want, want; you need, need, need. Well, you *don't* actually want it; you *don't* actually need it. No, you've got to wait: you read about it a bit, you see a review, you see it in advertising, and then six months later, it's in the store. Yes, I've waited – there's the excitement!
Sarah: I think there is a difference between the professional and the personal: I find it dreadful that people expect an instant response any time they send you a text or an e-mail. But for a material product – especially books or music that you *can* have straight away – that seems quite normal these days.

But you guys still survive as physical shops, in spite of a digital revolution. Does the physical experience still override the online one?
Sarah: For us, yes. You come to Colette and it's not just about shopping; there's a gallery, you can have a coffee, it's a place to meet up, to be inspired. If it was just limited to selling products, I could obviously understand the move to online only, but it is more of a living area than a simple store.
Adrian: It's absolutely 100 percent our raison d'être to offer that; it's almost cultural and social. If we didn't think people needed it, we wouldn't be here.

Do you think it will continue to grow?
Adrian: A couple more stores, maybe. I mean, who knows how big we will get? I've always admired and been amazed by Sarah for not wanting to do another Colette anywhere else.

The question I often ask CEOs is, 'When is big too big? When do you stop growing?' And Colette is like an extreme version of resisting expansion.
Sarah: People must think we're crazy! But we are so dedicated to the little details that we couldn't imagine technically doing anything bigger, or elsewhere. Above all, we really did open this just for Paris, to fill a gap here.

Do you not take up these offers of wonderful data analytics?
Sarah: My mother's always been in retail and even though it was different before, she often said, there'll be a season when *everyone* wants a blue dress, so you naturally go and buy lots of blue dresses for the next season, and then no one will want them! And she's right, especially with the current speed of things. I would prefer to miss the trend than become a slave to analysis!
Adrian: But it's a huge business, and brands like Zara that appeal to the majority of the population are totally dependent on these things. We *need* H&M, we *need* Zara, and if they do good collections based on analysis, that's OK. It creates work; it feeds people; you can't denigrate that.

Adrian, you've often talked about the importance of location. With the need for authentic shopping experiences to counteract e-commerce, is destination shopping having a resurgence?
Adrian: It's useful to be in the centre of town because you'll go for a meeting, or have a lunch somewhere, and it's like, 'Oh, Colette is nearby we should pop in'. That's especially true in London, where it takes you an hour and half to travel to east London. But we've never been able to afford certain places, and I don't think we'd fit in those upscale locations anyway. The original Dover Street was kind of cool because we were two roads away from Bond Street. Haymarket is now even more central, but it's still a bit 'off' in terms of supposed great retail locations. I think maybe we lost five percent, but we've got a lot more new customers, which is great.
Sarah: So what's the future for Dover Street Market?
Adrian: We'll open in Singapore next year. Beyond that, we'll see. I've got incredible teams in New York, London and Ginza that I'm already training here in order to take over, as I'm not going to be doing this all my life. It will be nice to be attached to it, but not have to worry about it. I don't think anyone could imagine Colette without Sarah, so when Sarah goes, Colette goes. But change is a good thing.
Sarah: That's all true, and I just realize how lucky I am to be in this position. The freedom from not needing to report to anybody is such a privilege. I don't have to justify my choice to anyone. I am so lucky in that respect, and I don't take it for granted.

Adrian, you said earlier that you have great respect for what Sarah has done. Did that influence your decision not to open in Paris?
Adrian: Completely and utterly. There is enormous respect between Sarah and me and Carla.[11] We have this tacit agreement in which we've split up the world. Sarah is in Paris, so I don't think Carla or I would dream of coming here. Carla's got Milan, Seoul and Shanghai; I wouldn't go to those places and she wouldn't come to Tokyo or London or New York… or Singapore! One day we should all do one together.

What is the common ground between Colette, DSM and Corso Como?
Adrian: I think we share a lot of qualities, from working with our hearts and minds and souls and giving everything. But I don't think that Colette would be so great in London, and I don't want a Dover Street in Paris, because Dover Street was really born out of the idea of those great London markets from the 1960s and 1970s. Colette came from a lack of anything interesting happening retail-wise at the time in Paris.

What is the most revolutionary thing that one could do in retail today?
Adrian: We still *are* being revolutionary, we always will be; we just need to keep on going.

'Why do we always want instant gratification? Why do we want to see something in a show and buy it the next day? I can't stand the idea of see-now-buy-now.'

1. First opened in 1967, Kensington Market was a three-storey emporium located at 48-53 Kensington High Street, London. Inside were stalls run by independent traders (most famously, perhaps, Fred Bulsara or Freddie Mercury) selling clothing and shoes, trinkets and other oddities. In 1999, the lease on the market ran out and the traders were told to leave by late January 2000. One trader, Joe Oksuzer, told the *Independent* in September 1999 that, 'Kensington Market is a living legend. You can't just close it down … they can't just chuck us out like this'. It was closed in February 2000 and the building demolished in 2001. The replacement building today houses a Carphone Warehouse, Currys electrical-goods store and a PC World computer shop.

2. Parly 2, which opened on November 4, 1969, in Le Chesnay, west of Paris, was France's second large-scale out-of-town shopping mall (the first had opened two weeks earlier near Nice). The town council was against the complex's original name of Paris 2, so it was renamed Parly 2, a contraction of Paris and Marly, the latter in honour of the neighbouring Forêt de Marly.

3. Sarah's mother, Colette Roussaux, after whom Colette the store is named, owned a store in Sentier, a neighbourhood known as the traditional centre of the Paris's ready-to-wear clothes industry. The area in the second *arrondissement* remains home to large numbers of clothing, fabric and accessories manufacturers and wholesalers, although rising rents and the changing market have seen many leave since its peak in the 1980s. The name comes from Rue de Sentier on its northern edge and means 'path' in French. According to Jacques Hillairet's encyclopaedic *Dictionnaire Historique des Rue de Paris*, the street took its name from 'a path taken by a starving wolf during the harsh winter of 1612-1613'.

4. Kiehl's, a family-run apothecary, opened at Third Avenue and East 13th Street in Manhattan in 1851. It remained the only store until the brand was bought by L'Oréal in 2000. Today, the company has a retail presence in 46 countries or territories, including the Northern Mariana Islands.

5. Independent perfumer Le Labo was created by Fabrice Penot and Edouard Roschi in 2006. Its fifth fragrance, Santal 33, has become a smash global hit. Or as the *New York Times*' *T Magazine* put it in November 2015: "the most ubiquitous scent in fashion; a signature scent that is so signature you can recognize it in every city in the world."

6. NikeLab is the Eugene, Oregon-based brand's experimental line renowned for its exclusive collaborations with designers and high-end fashion labels.

7. James Jebbia launched streetwear brand Supreme in 1994 and, using a policy of limited-edition collaborations with other brands and high-profile artists, has turned it into one of fashion's most sought-after labels.

8. British actress Una Stubbs first appeared on British television aged 21 in 1958. She went on to star in such classic sitcoms as *Till Death Do Us Part*, *Fawlty Towers*, and *In Sickness and in Health*. She also starred in *Worzel Gummidge*, in which she played Aunt Sally, the fiancée of the titular and head-removing scarecrow. She is perhaps best-known to generations of British TV viewers as the 'girls' team captain' on *Give Us a Clue*, a charades-based quiz show that ran from 1979 to 1985, and which pitted her mime skills against those of 'boys' team captain' and dancer, Lionel Blair. Since 2010, she has starred opposite Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes' housekeeper Mrs. Hudson in *Sherlock*.

9. Ms. Stubbs will be 80 on May 1, 2017.

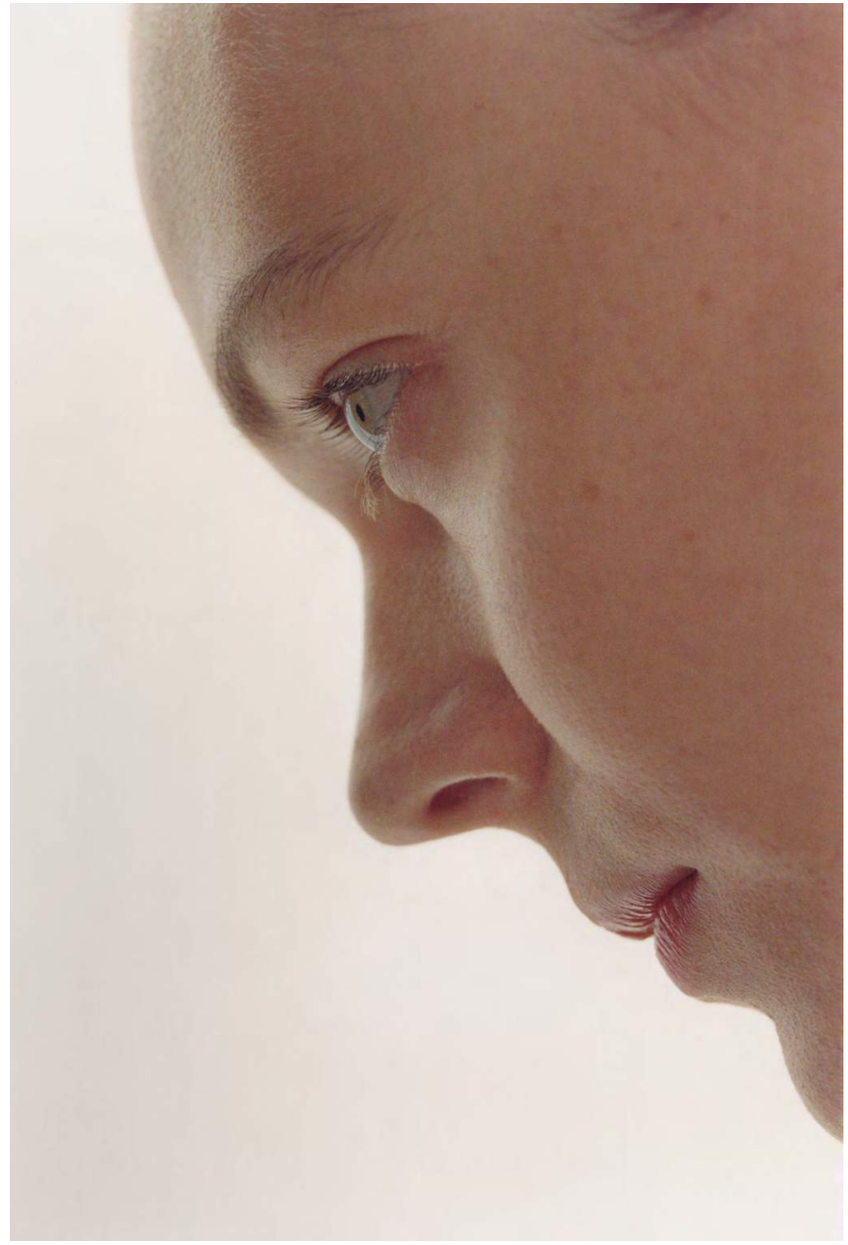
10. Ruth Chapman and her husband Tom opened their first Matches store in Wimbledon in 1987, and launched their first e-commerce website in 2006. Online revenue now makes up 85 percent of Matchesfashion.com's turnover.

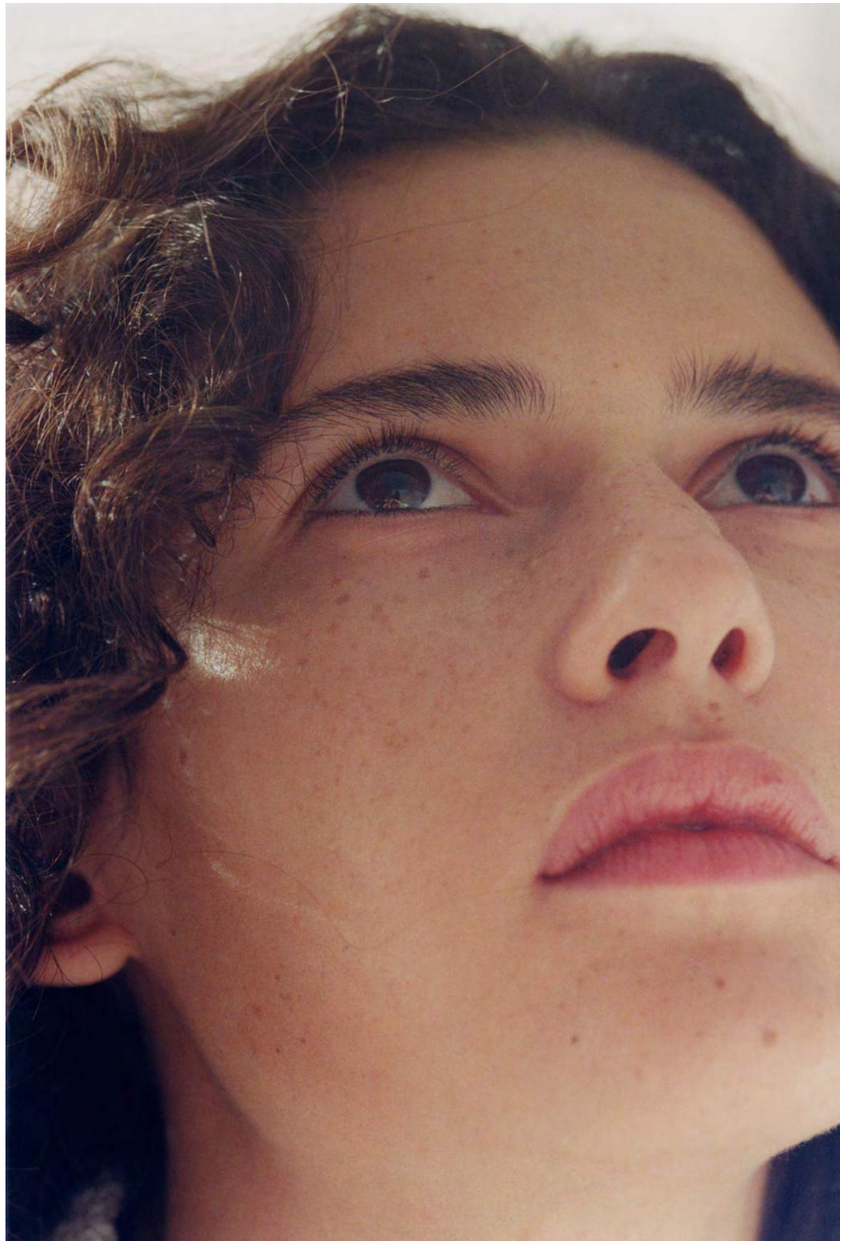
11. Carla Sozzani founded 10 Corso Como in Milan in 1990 as 'a radical new union of culture and commerce', which mixed art and photography with fashion shopping. 10 Corso Como now has branches in Seoul, Shanghai and Beijing.

‘In today’s fashion, sex doesn’t sell. Ennui does.’

Why a vacant stare is the look du jour.

By Alexander Fury
Photographs by Zoë Ghertner
Styling by Marie Chaix



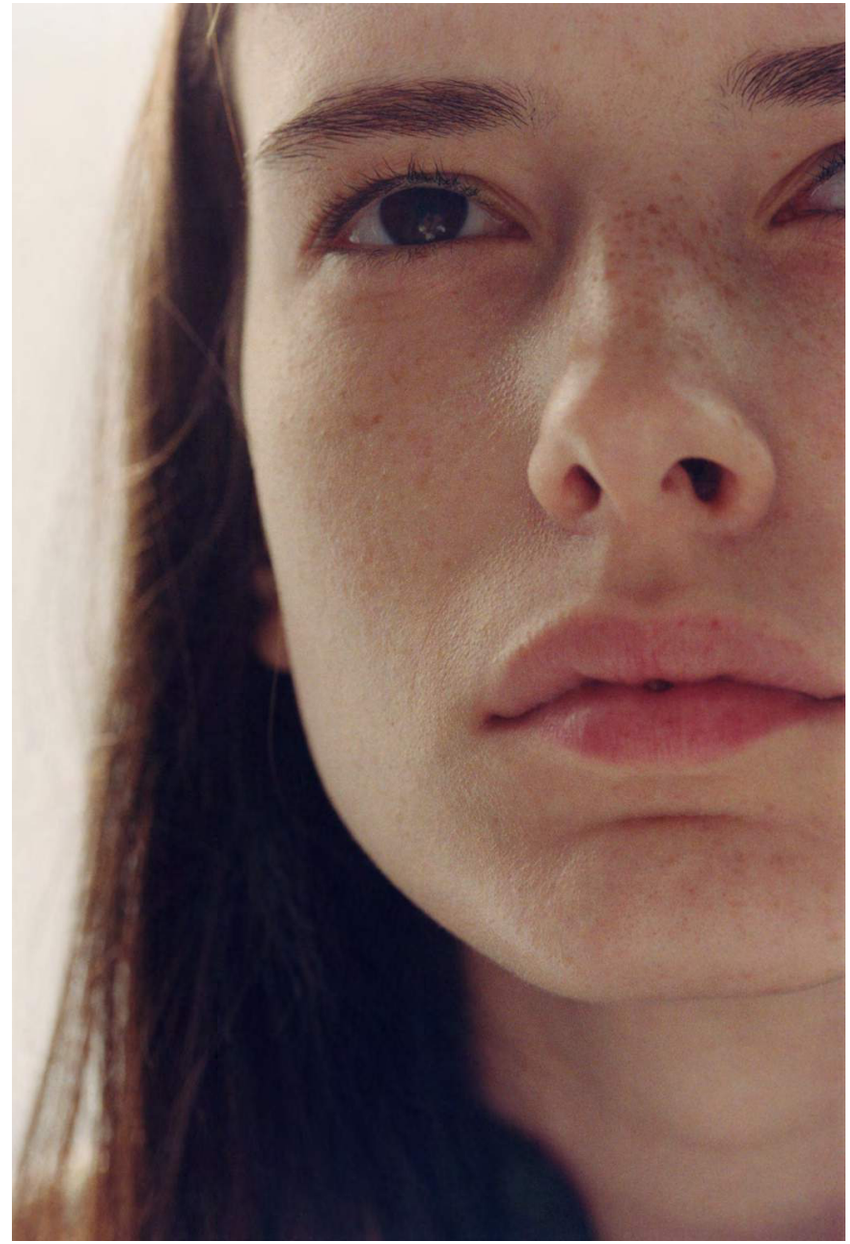


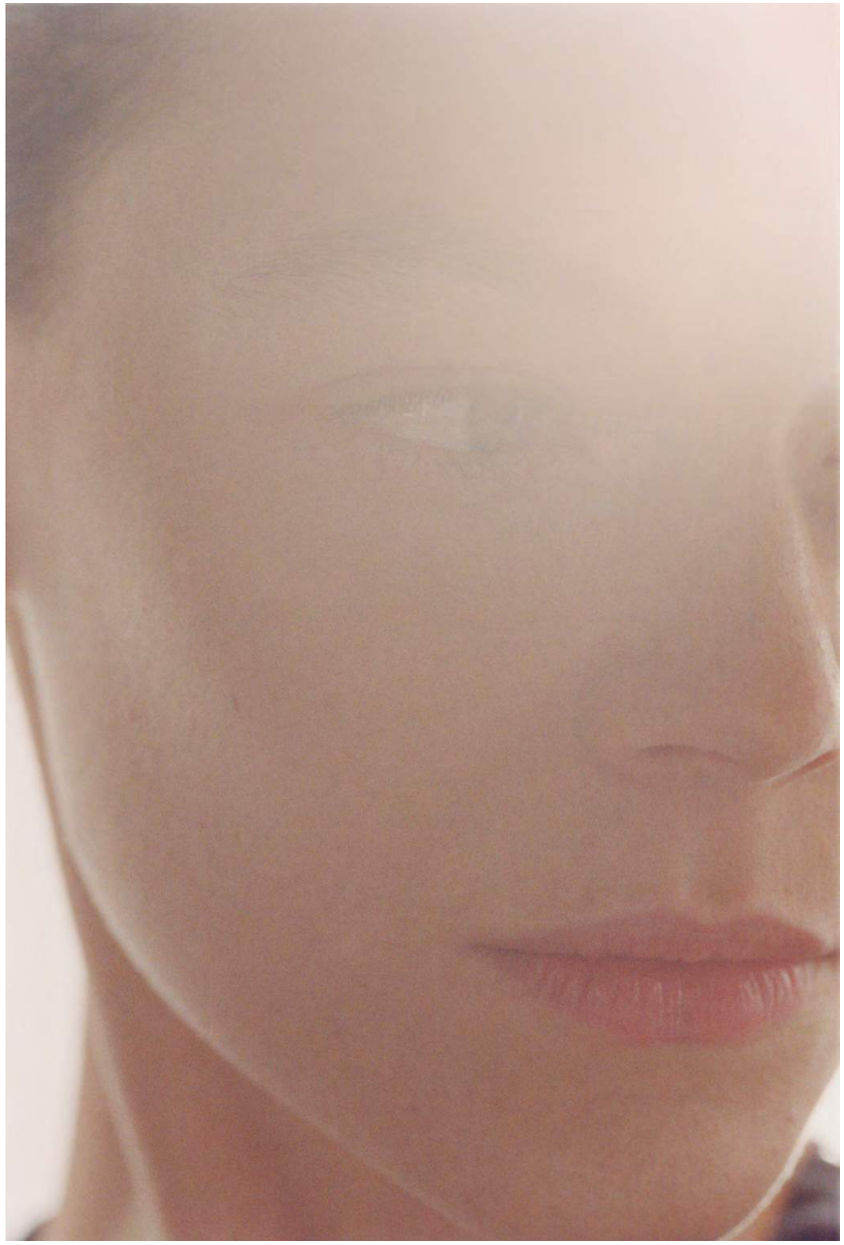
Sunniva wears a dress, trousers, and shoes by Céline, with tutu beneath by Repetto

Iana wears a blouse by Fendi,
with a skirt by Dior

Isabella wears a velvet coat and
trousers by Giorgio Armani,
with tutu by Repetto,
and shoes by Céline

Sunniva wears coat by Chanel,
with tutu by Repetto





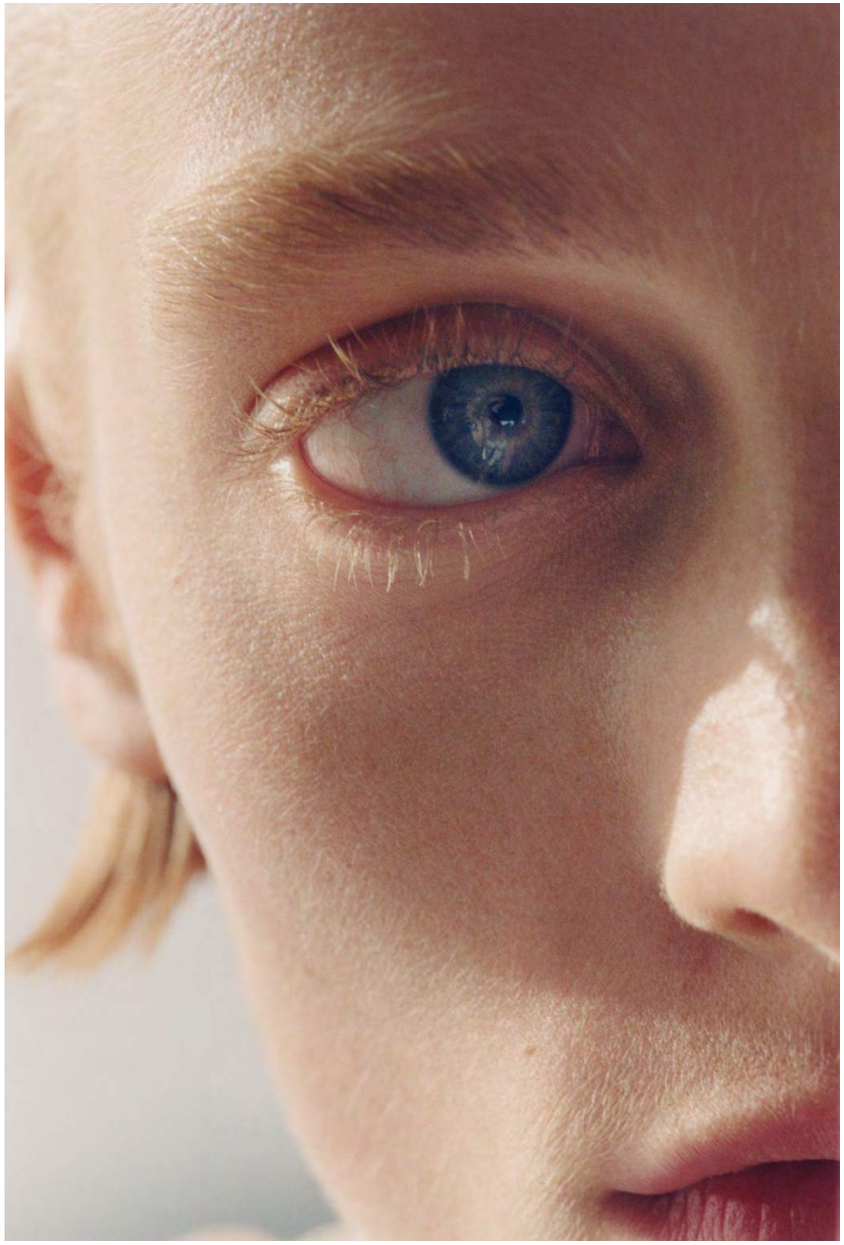
Iana wears velvet dress by Hillier Bartley,
with tutu beneath by Repetto,
and shoes by Céline

Ally wears a blouse and trousers by Chloé, with shoes by Céline

Sunniva wears a black velvet jumpsuit by Ralph Lauren, with a necklace by Miu Miu, and shoes by Céline

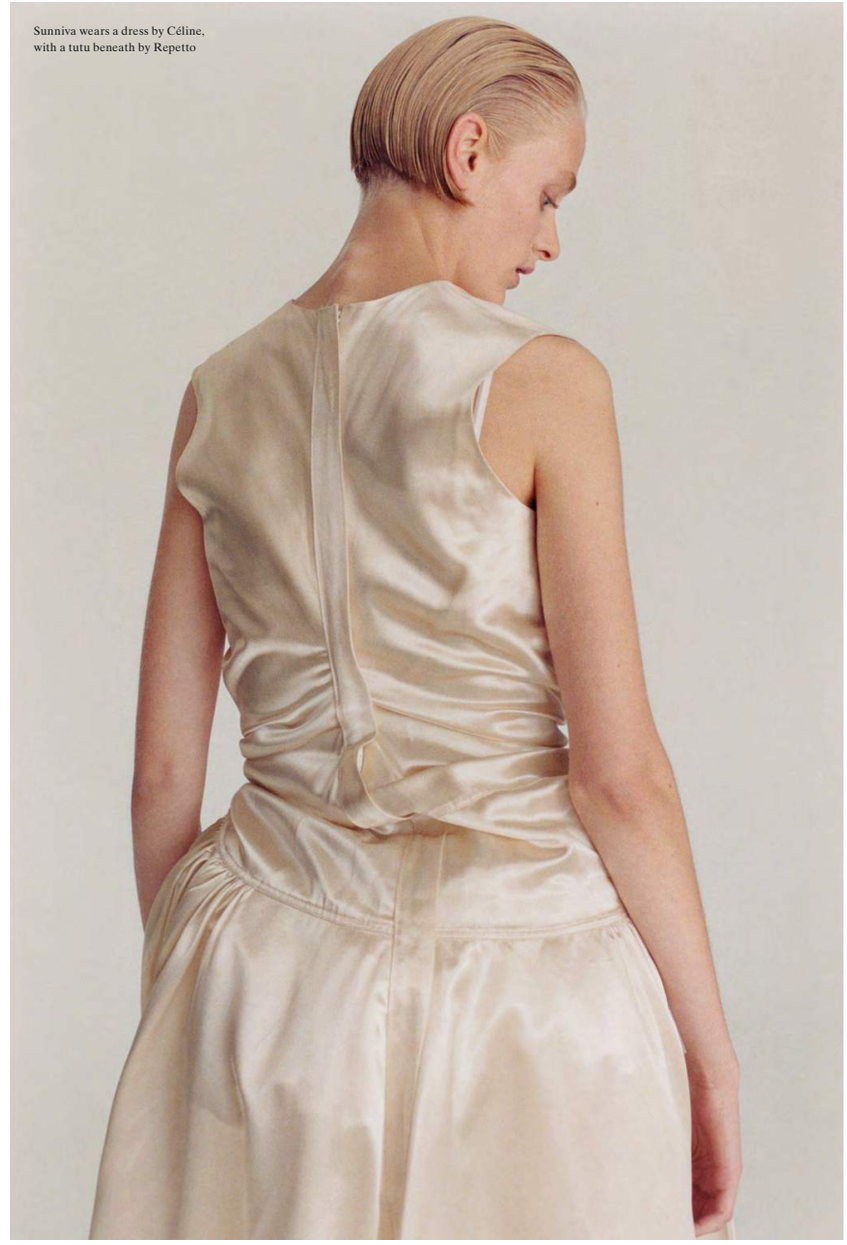
Iana wears a blouse by Fendi,
with a skirt by Dior

Ally wears a dress by Paco Rabanne,
with a dress and trousers beneath
by Molly Goddard



Isabelle wears a coat and blouse by Dior, with a tutu by Repetto, hat by Heather Huey, and shoes by Céline

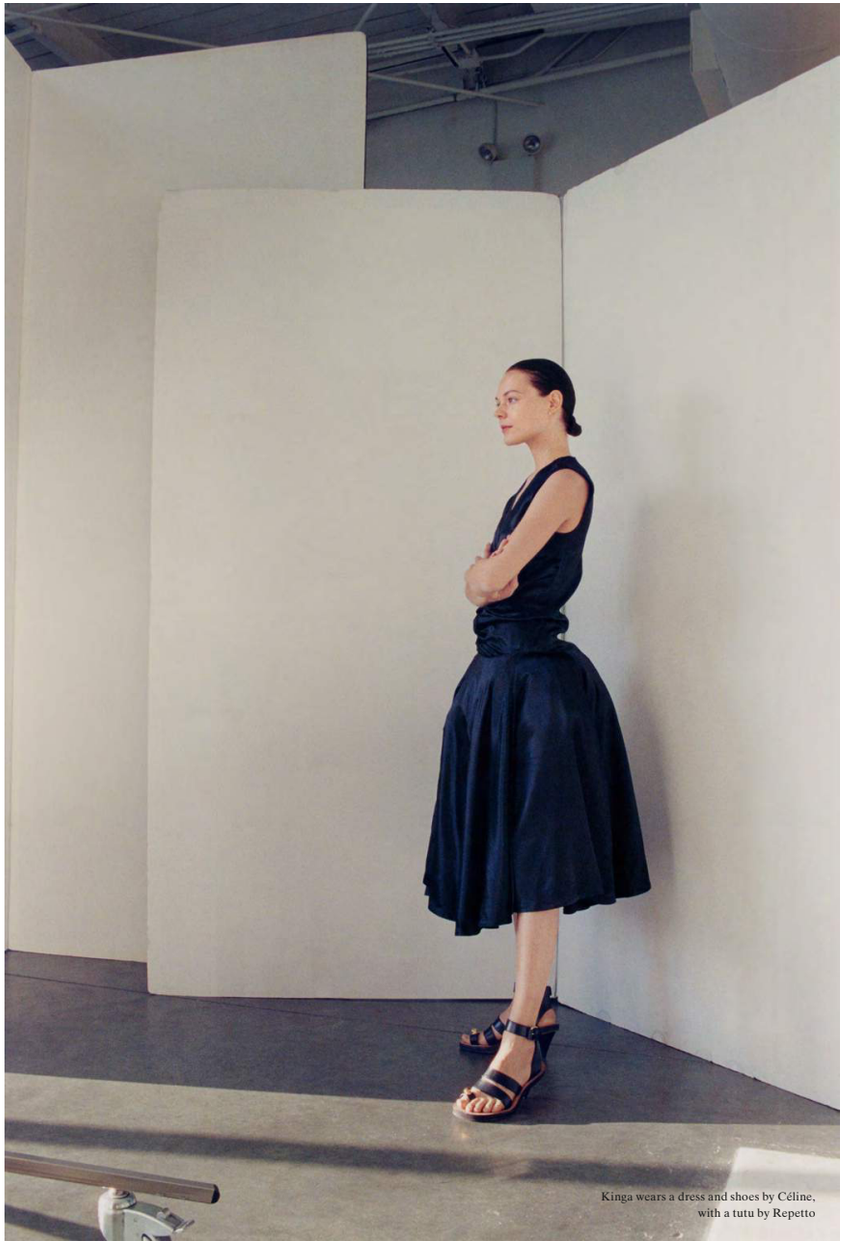
Kinga wears a dress and choker by Loewe, with shoes by Céline



Sunniva wears a dress by Céline, with a tutu beneath by Repetto

Ally wears a dress by Louis Vuitton

Iana wears a dress by Balenciaga,
with shoes by Céline



Kinga wears a dress and shoes by Céline,
with a tutu by Repetto

Ally wears a dress by Louis Vuitton,
with a tutu by Repetto

You know the look: blank-eyed model, jaw slack, pupils dulled. You see it on all kind of faces, staring vacantly from the covers of magazines, or even in person, as models perambulate in varying states of undress through the four fashion capitals. Backstage, behind the scenes, these young women are alive, dynamic, vibrant. They want to be doctors and writers, maybe actresses. They want to save the world. But when they're working, they disengage; they become passive and receptive. To paraphrase John Berger, they do not look – they watch themselves being looked at.

OK, I know I'm a man, but hear me out.

It isn't a notion particular to the model of today. As Berger suggests, the passivity of the female gaze has characterized our consumption of imagery for centuries. 'Men act and women appear,' asserted Berger in his landmark 1972 book *Ways of Seeing*.[1] Which perhaps sounds like rubbish. But how true is it when Berger asserts that: 'A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually … Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another.' For a model, that is not only her life, but her livelihood.

Fashion is often pilloried for being superficial. Which is understandable. Fashion is about looks, of course, about refashioning outward perceptions of your body through the garments on your back. But it is also, fundamentally, about sensuality – the touch of fabric, the feel of a garment on the body, the transformative effect of physical contact between us and it. Occasionally, one is subjugated for the other: the comfort of the track pant versus the discomfort of the corset. Feeling good versus looking great.

Yet when 'fashion' is discussed, it is often reduced to the purely visual. That is also the fault of the industry, in part. Many people cannot afford fashion; many garments will not, ultimately, be manufactured or sold. The ephemerality of fashion is frequently only captured for posterity by imagery. Unlike food, which has to be digested to be truly appreciated, fashion can often be devoured by the eye alone.

Laura Mulvey, in her seminal text 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'[2] (which applies to still as well as moving images), reasoned that women are constantly diverting their own eyes, facilitating their status as the object to be looked at rather than the subject doing the looking. Again, this is part and parcel of the job for a model. A certain objectification of their body is inherent: a model will speak of the obstinacy of her waist in yielding to a tightly cinched dress or the ability of her feet to ram themselves into shoes very many sizes smaller than they should be. Of course, women (and men) often objectify and analyse their appearance – but seldom with the bald functionality of a model, who knows the limitations of her body the same way a mechanic knows a car. A body is a model's tool of the trade – 'a functional object', as Jean Baudrillard described it in *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*.[3]

Perhaps that accounts, in part, for the detachment of a model's gaze from the magazine page. Berger sees women objectifying themselves; Baudrillard reasons that model's bodies become objects. And, technically, the magazine page – or, indeed, the tainted canvas – transforms the body into an inanimate object, one that can be manipulated, manhandled and even destroyed.

Ironically, for models whose images are presumably manufactured for consumption, their look frequently comes across as unapproachable, haughty, aloof.

But the passivity of the female gaze in fashion imagery is often accompanied by a degree of ennui. Which can be interpreted differently. Models gaze not with passivity, but with disinterest. If they are watching themselves being looked at, they are doing so dispassionately. The seductive gazes of the past – what Baudrillard calls, 'Medusa eyes … these fascinating/fascinated, sunken eyes, this objectless gaze – both oversignification of desire and total absence of desire' – have been superseded by passivity, pupils barely flickering over her viewer. In contrast to the pornographic actor – to whom she is frequently compared – the fashion model doesn't purport to be interested in her observer. Nor herself. Nor anything, really.

That wasn't always the case. Fashion and pornography once made uneasy but natural bedfellows. But just as the bodies of pornography differ vastly from the bodies of models – both are functional objects geared to elicit desire but, presumably, not in the same audiences – so do models' gazes. Pornography still beckons viewers in, to join and enjoy, openly indulging scopophilia. The fashion image, however, is remote and removed, perhaps to better adhere to the old adage that we always desire most that which we cannot possess.

There's another notion, of course, that blows Berger's assertions apart when applied to fashion. The primary consumers of female fashion imagery are other women. In her essay 'Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look', Diana Fuss[4] argues that fashion photography is primarily focused on the consumption of a female model by female viewers. 'The fashion industry operates as one of the few institutionalized spaces where women can look at other women with cultural impunity,' she asserts. 'It provides a socially sanctioned structure in which women are encouraged to *consume*.' Heterosexual women admire models, generally, because they want to *be* them, in some way – acquire their life, their looks, certainly their clothing. Heterosexual men admire women because they want to *have* them.

That is about examining the gaze of the onlooker, which, whether male or female, reduces the model to an object, to the status of the observed. But what about the gaze of that model? The idea of her as an active participant in an exchange? A model is not unaware of her own image – she is no mere Trilby manipulated by her Svengali[5]. What really is the effect of her female gaze?

Like the fantasies depicted in Renaissance art, models clutch handbags of exorbitant price, dressed in furs, coldly glaring at us from their finery.

Ironically, for models whose images are presumed manufactured for consumption, the look frequently comes across as unapproachable, haughty, aloof. Connected, once again, with that idea of the unobtainable. The body of the model can never be achieved, particularly because of fashion's current, overwhelming focus on youth. While fat can be suctioned and curves enhanced – they're directly adjustable – youth can only be imitated, never attained. Time is a precious commodity, for more reasons than one. The young fashion model stares with a look of detachment and slight disdain, daring us to desire what we can never possess, what she has: her youth.

What else does she possess? A dress that may never be made; a jewel we could never own (but neither could she). In that respect, the contemporary fashion model is linked to grand Renaissance portraits. Like Bronzino's 1545 portrait of Eleonora of Toledo, whose sumptuous gown is thought to be a figment of the artist's imagination, based on a fragment of rich fabric.[6] The fantasies depicted in Renaissance art were intended to confound and impress rival families, to speak of the real riches of those portrayed, and possibly to exaggerate them to even more fantastical proportions. The same doublespeak takes place in a fashion image, where the models clutch handbags of exorbitant price and limited availability, dressed in furs, coldly glaring at us from their finery.

There is, of course, the notion that the gaze of the model is neither disapproving nor desirous, but simply blank. Vacant. It is the idea of the model as seen through her French name: *mannequin*. The model as an artist's dummy, a passive vessel with drapery simply arranged across her surface. The body, writes Baudrillard, 'particularly the female body, and, most particularly, the body of that absolute model, the fashion mannequin – constitutes itself as an object that is the equivalent to the other sexless and functional objects purveyed in advertising'. Does that victimize women? Debatable, particularly as the models themselves are complicit in their presentation. 'Attitude' is the notion lots of designers speak about today, designers like Demna Gvasalia of Vetements and Balenciaga. And where he leads, many follow. And that bring us, inevitably, to the idea of cool, which preoccupies fashion even today.

Cool is about more than simply being 'in fashion'. Especially today, when fashion is everywhere. It's about being in the *right* fashion, with the right attitude. The attitude of detachment so familiar on sullen teenagers' faces is the current fashion standard. Models are, perhaps, not merely blank canvasses – what Baudrillard dubs 'the void we rush to fill with our own dreams and desires' – but intentionally distant, and therefore desirable, in themselves. Superior.

That ties with the ennui of the female gaze. It feels passive, but it can, in fact, be perceived as active but disinterested, too cool for school. The fashion model is unmoved by the clothing on her back, by their expense or sumptuous texture, in the same way that her historical counterparts are unruffled by the magnificent splendour in which they are posed. Monarchs rule by divine right, not privilege. There's a degree of superiority to the gaze of the female model that ties her straight back to the royal portraits of the past, so confident of her position that no further assertion is necessary. The sitter's ennui is in direct contrast with the active gaze of the observer, her voyeur. But rather than objectifying the model,

it could be argued that the tables are turned, the observer's desire impotent, eternally unfulfilled. They are, after all, just looking at a model on a page: a model whose gaze they can't even meet.

Of course, there's a counterargument. Commercial magazines delight in engaging their viewers, employing lingering eye contact to pull the observer into the page, to the product. Increasingly, the gaze meeting yours will be that of a celebrity, attractively packaged, accessibly placed, possibly with a piano-toothed grin, inviting you in. But what is the product those celebrities – both female and male – are selling with their come-hither gazes? More than the clothing on their backs, they are frequently hawking themselves and their talent as the primary product. Celebrities use magazines to flog a film, a book or an album. They may sell some of the clothes on their backs, but that isn't their primary aim. They have both ulterior and interior motives.

The fashion model, by contrast, is open and blatant about her aim to sell a garment, rather than herself. A bland, expressionless disinterest amid the luxury is, arguably, seductive in itself. It directs your gaze from the blank face to the richness of the clothes, to the product that can – perhaps – be obtained. It also inverts old adages and challenges conventions. Today, sex doesn't sell, it seems. Ennui does.

1. Described by the *Guardian* as a 'combative art critic, radical writer and consistent challenger of institutional power', John Berger was born in London in 1926 and moved to rural Haute-Savoie in France in 1962 (where he still lives). In 1972, he won the Booker Prize for his novel *G*, the same year that *Ways of Seeing*, his radical four-part television series about art, was aired by the BBC and published as a book.

2. Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey first published 'Visual Pleasure…' as an article in 1975 in academic journal *Screen*. Mulvey was deeply influenced by French theorist Jacques Lacan. She explained that the article's starting point was 'the way film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle'.

3. Cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard's *La Société de Consommation. Ses mythes, ses structures* was originally published in French in 1970.

4. Diana Fuss, a professor of English at Princeton, published the essay in *Critical Enquiry* in 1992.

5. *Trilby* by George du Maurier, published in 1895, tells the story of Trilby O'Ferrall, a young half-Irish woman working as an artists' model and laundress in 1850s Bohemian Paris. She falls under the spell of Svengali, a hypnotist, whose powers turn her into a successful singer. The book was so popular that the character's name passed into common parlance meaning, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'A person who exercises a controlling or mesmeric influence on another, especially for a sinister purpose'.

6. In *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, Paola Tinagli and Mary Rogers write that, 'The gown painted with such a precision of detail in Eleonora's portrait did not in fact exist: Bronzino was given a piece of cloth to work from; a sample in the Bargello shows almost exactly the same design'.

Photographer's assistant: Julian Kapadia. Stylist's assistants: Mélina Brossard, Victor Cordero and Claire Tang. Hair stylist: Mark Hampton at Julian Watson Agency. Hair stylist's assistant: Jonathan Mason. Make-up: Fara at Frank Reps. Make-up assistant: Laila Hayani. Nails: Gina Edwards. Models: Iana Godnia at Heroes, Sunniva Vaatevik at Viva London, Isabella Ridolfi at Viva London, Ally Ertel at The Hive Management, Kinga Rajzak at Elite London. Agent: Alexis at Art Partner.

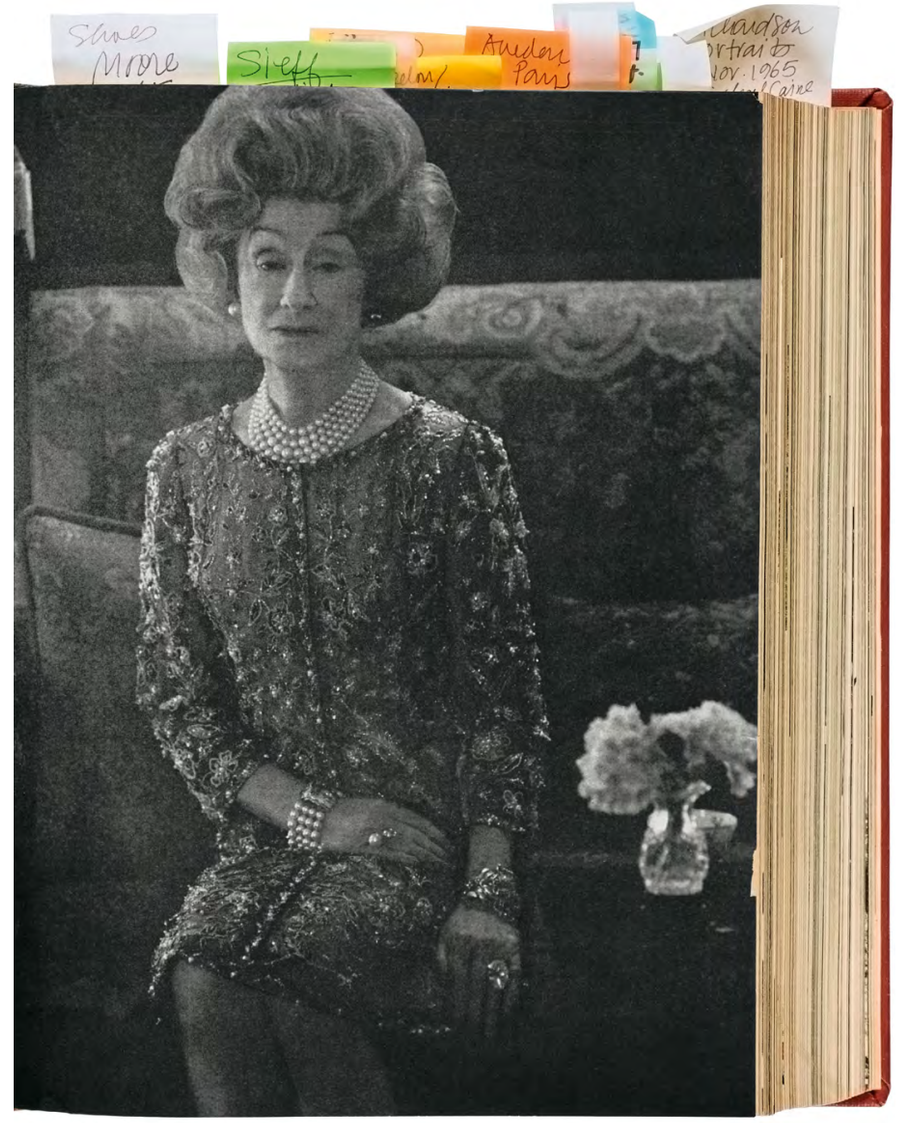
Ally wears a coat by Miu Miu, tutu by Repetto, with trousers beneath by Molly Goddard, and shoes by Céline

‘It was like space exploration in a fashion magazine.’

When art director Ruth Ansel took *Harper’s Bazaar* into the unknown.

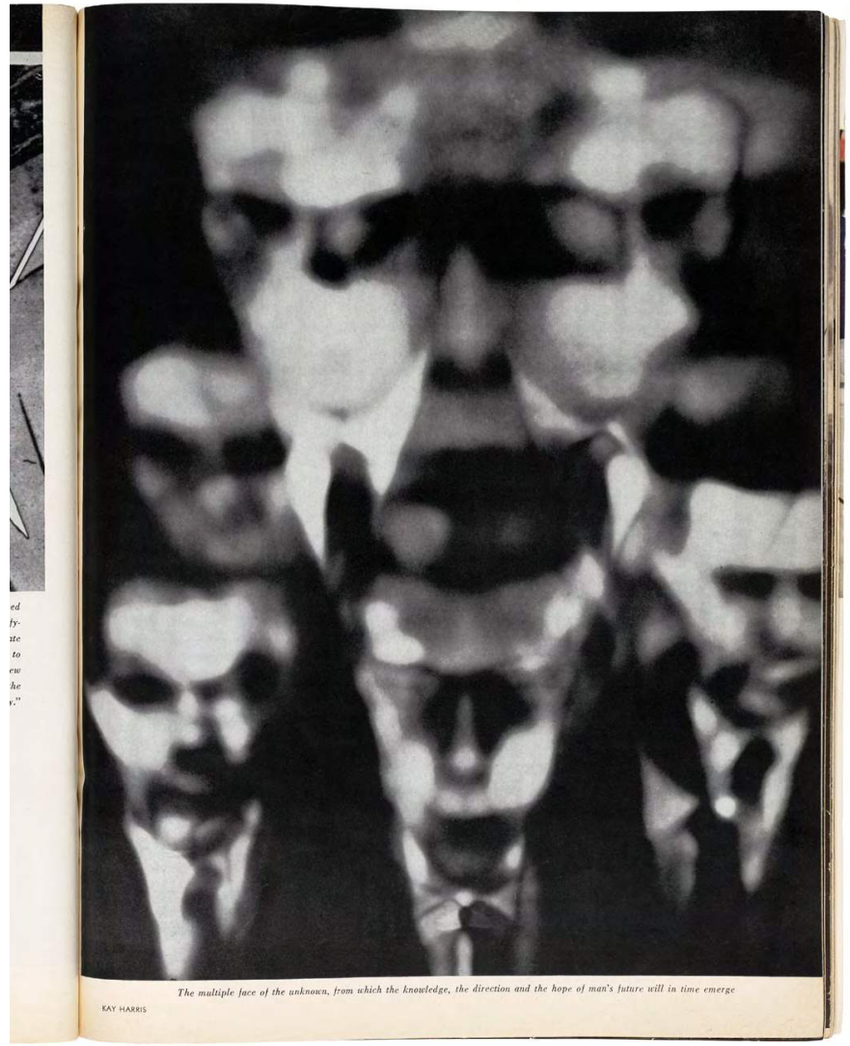
By Jonathan Wingfield
Portrait by Gregory Harris
Portfolio curated by Dennis Freedman

Photographer’s assistant: Stephen Wordie. Digital tech: Erica Capabianca. Hair and make-up: Cameron Rains for Oribe at The Wall Group. Production: Bo Zhang.

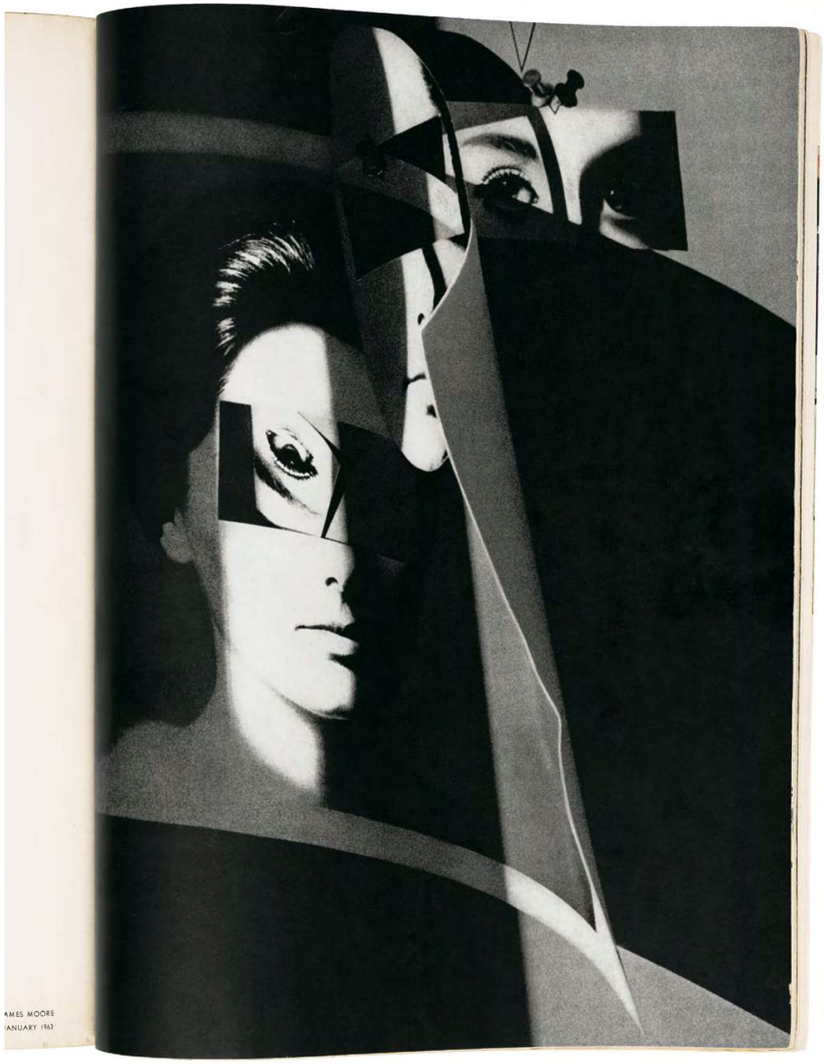


Harper's Bazaar, July 1965
'Fashion Independent: Mrs. T. Charlton Henry'
Photograph by Diane Arbus

Harper's Bazaar, August 1966
'Young Fashions in Holland': Jose Gerlach
Photograph by Saul Leiter



Harper's Bazaar, January 1963
'The multiple face of the unknown'
Photograph by Kay Harris



Harper's Bazaar, January 1963
'How to Raise an Eyebrow'
Photograph by James Moore

Harper's Bazaar, April 1965
'The Editor's Guestbook'
Photographs by Andy Warhol

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IN THE DISTANT GALAXY OF ALPHA CENTAURI, ON THE PLANET RADIANTA, THE EARTH GIRL RECONNOITERS. SHE WILL CONQUER THE CRUEL DICTATORSHIP OF SALLOWAXOS WITH HER BEAUTY...

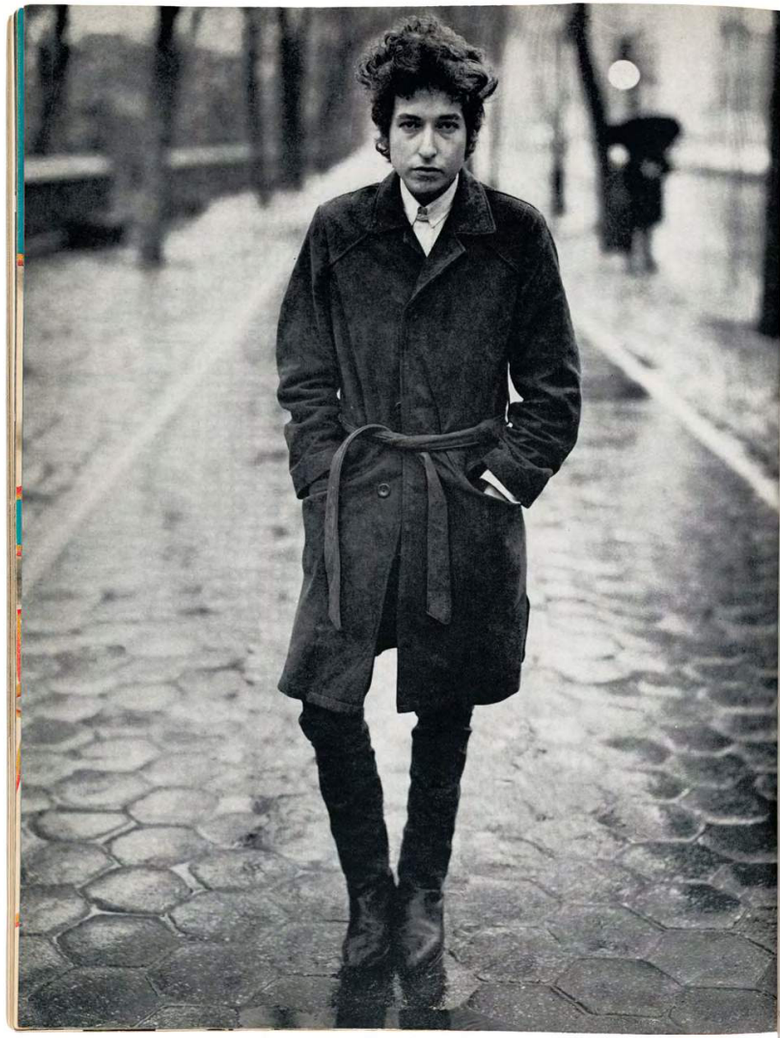
TO ENCHANT THE ASTEROIDS, to cause Martians to surrender, the earth girl, Ultima (naturally), leans upon her glorious galaxy of Ultima II cosmetics. Their texture—as vaporous, as weightless, as rarified as the very atmosphere of outer space. Their delicate, almost transparent colors—madly celestial delights. "Why blast off to the moon wearing anything less?" asks Ultima, modestly, crooning over the creamy, seductive splendor of her Pewter eye shadow bounded with pale Snowfrost; her Aurora Beige Creme Foundation; glowing Tawny Peach Blushing Creme; Aruba Red #5 lipstick—as yet another meteor flashes by, unnoticed. All by Revlon.

Meanwhile, back at the space station, our young lady astronaut (below), unwilling to discard her precious earthling chic—cuts out in a straight silk dress, futuristically designed in sections of white, black and pink—enough to send any solar system into a spin. By Bill Blass for Maurice Rentner, in Chardon-Marché silk crepe. About $190. At Bonwit Teller; Julius Garfinckel, Washington; Gus Mayer. Pink stockings by Berkshire. Gustinettes slipper-shoe.

RICHARD AVEDON

THE GALACTIC BEAUTY TO THE RESCUE...

Harper's Bazaar, April 1965
'The Galactic Beauty to the Rescue': Jean Shrimpton
Photograph by Richard Avedon



DAVID AVEDON

From
MEMOIR OF AN AGED CHILD

BY ALFRED DUHRSSEN

A man comes into the room and asks me questions. He asks me how old I am and I tell him I do not know. He asks me how old my sister is and I say: seven.

"Are you younger or older than your sister?" he asks.

"Younger."

"Were you born before or after your sister?"

"Before."

"Will you ever be as old as your sister?"

"Yes, when I grow up."

"Who is older: your father or your grandfather?"

"My father."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"What makes you say that your father's older?"

"He's taller."

The man takes a stack of cards from his briefcase and shows me one.

"Now tell me what is happening in the picture."

"The woman is sitting at the table. She is holding her head in her hands and crying."

"Why is she crying?"

"Because the door is open. Someone has left."

"Who do you think has left?"

"The husband, I guess."

"Why do you think he left?"

"I don't know."

"Now look at this picture. What is the man doing?"

"He's drinking."

"Why is he drinking?"

"Because his wife is at home crying."

"Why is she crying?"

"Because he's drinking."

"Who began the quarrel?"

"I don't know. Maybe they both drink."

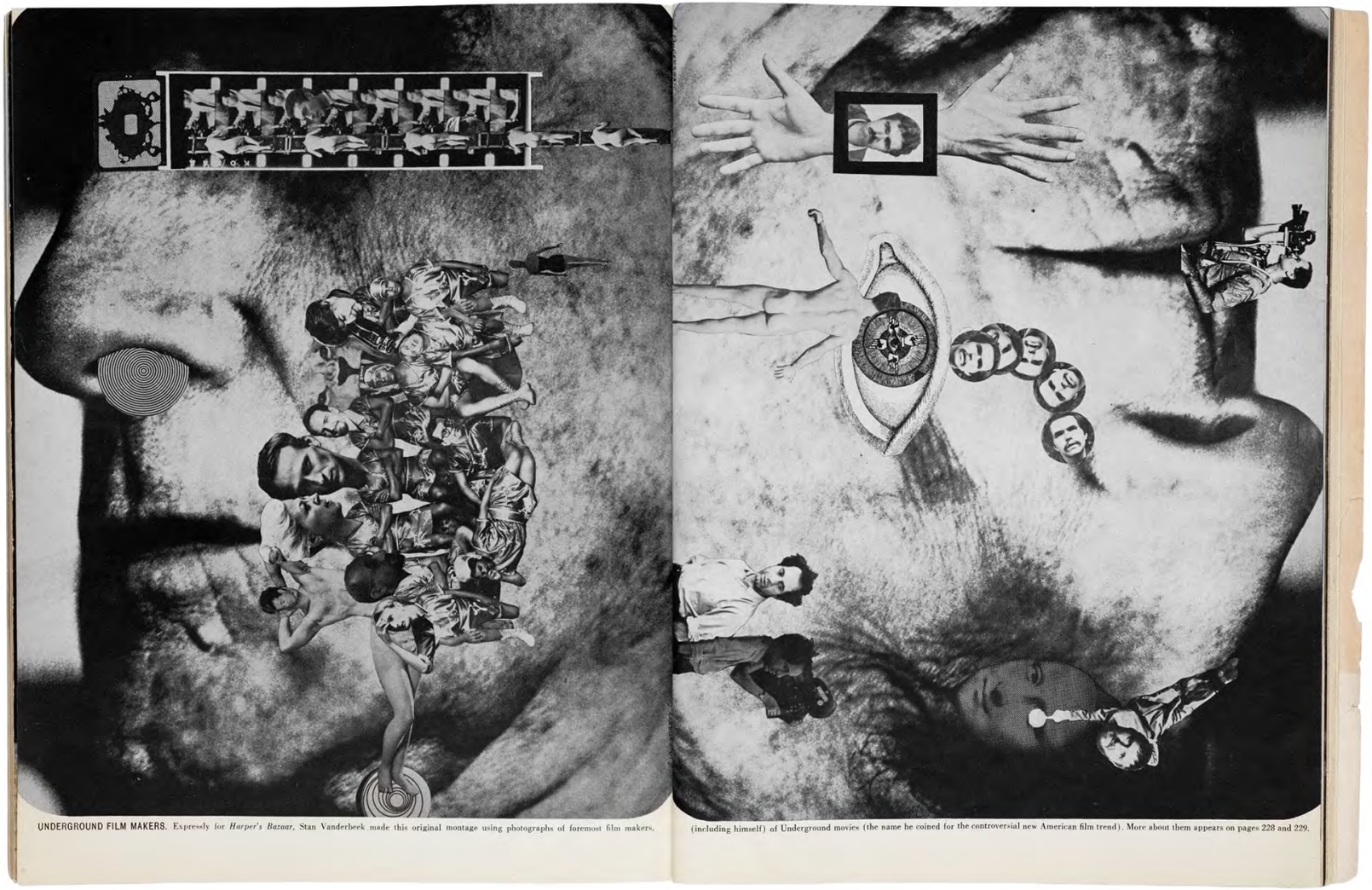
"Good, very good."

He puts the cards back into his leather case and leaves the room.

I began by drawing a floor plan in the sand with a pointed branch. I drew a living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and four bedrooms—one for my mother, one for my father, one for my sister and one for myself; and placed heavy stones in the four corners and intersections. Then I dug deep holes and sank corner posts, buttressed around with stones and crossed staves. To the posts I nailed and tied heavy oak planks blown from the decks of passing ships and cast up by the sea. For a roof I laid more oak planks *(Continued on page 231)*

BOB DYLAN (opposite), the teenagers' troubadour came out of the West to wander restlessly through the country, playing and singing his own folk tunes, like "Blowin' in the Wind." More of a words man than a musician, he sets his verbal flashes of insight to simple melodies that hush his audience. Now, five years later, his restless wanderings include brief but profitable stops at Columbia's recording studio which is releasing his latest L.P., *Bringing It All Back Home.*

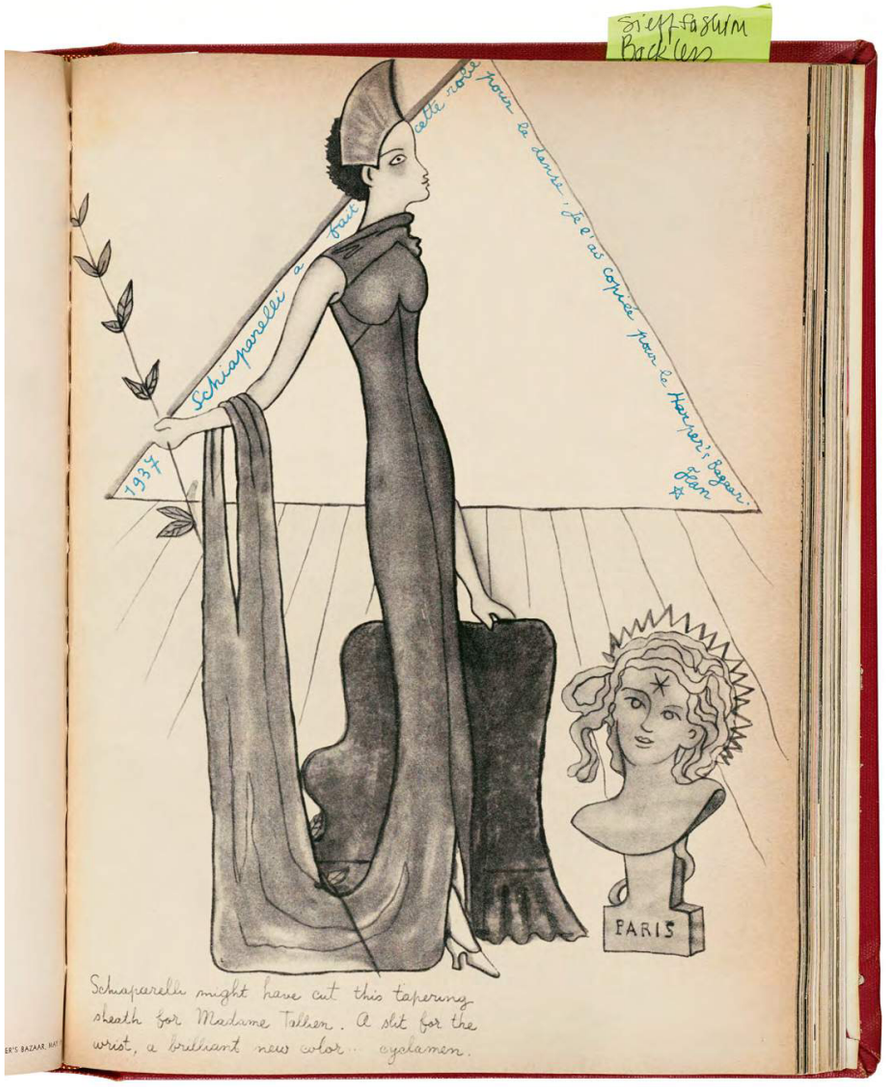
Harper's Bazaar, April 1965
Bob Dylan; 'Memoir of an Aged Child' by Alfred Duhrssen
Photograph by Richard Avedon



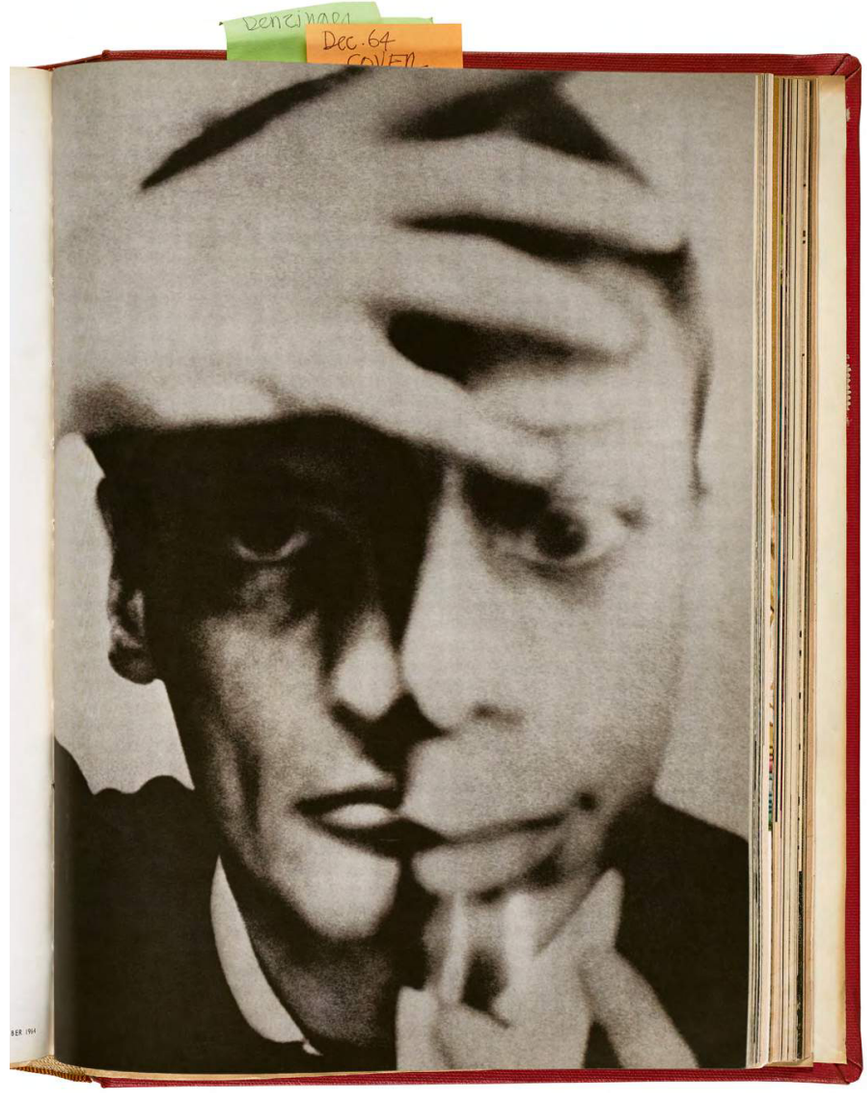
UNDERGROUND FILM MAKERS. Expressly for *Harper's Bazaar*, Stan Vanderbeek made this original montage using photographs of foremost film makers, (including himself) of Underground movies (the name he coined for the controversial new American film trend). More about them appears on pages 228 and 229.

Harper's Bazaar, April 1965
'Underground Film Makers'
Photomontage by Stan Vanderbeek

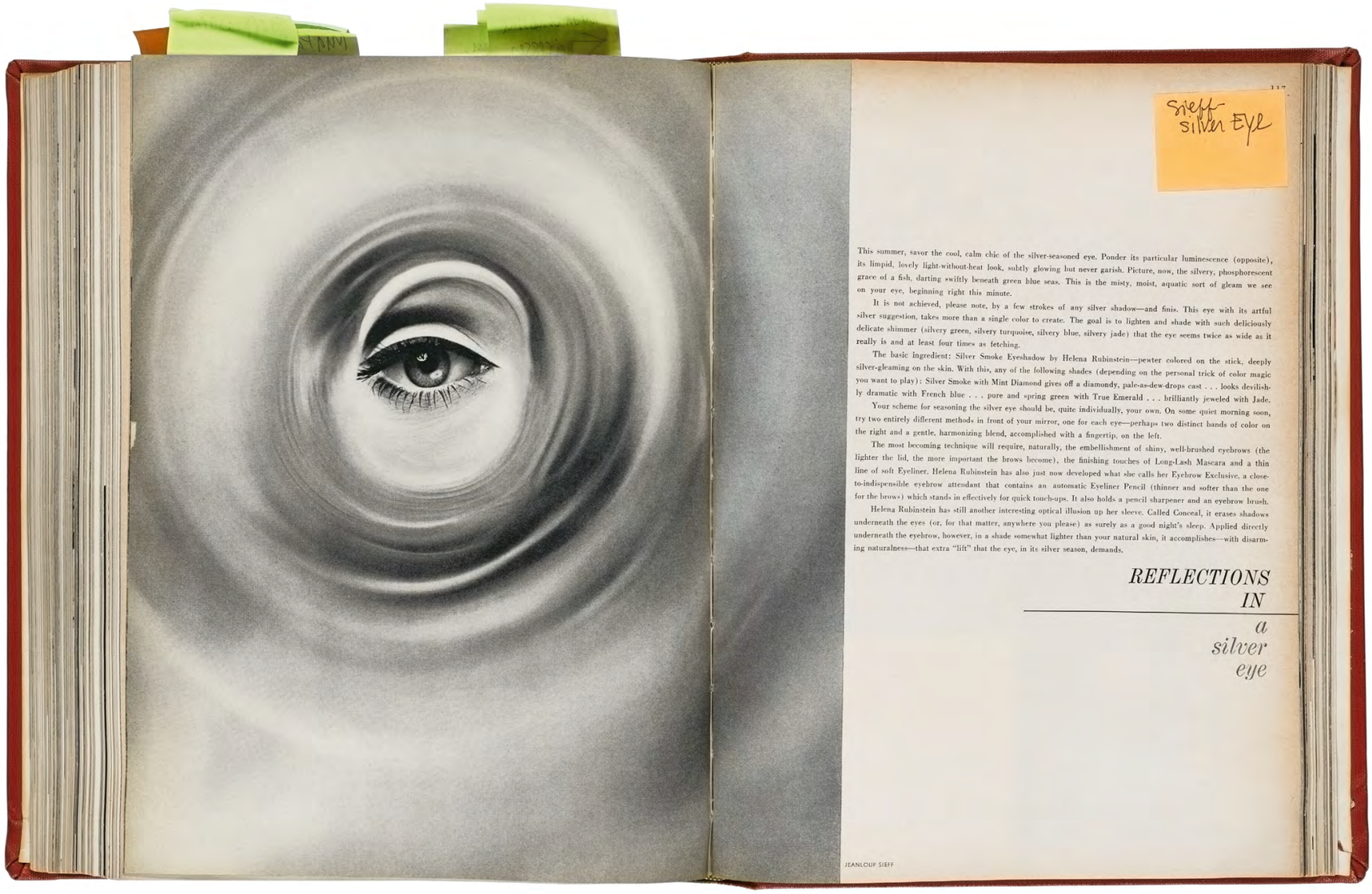
Harper's Bazaar, March 1967
'High Gear Fashion: The Foot and Ferrari'
Photograph by Bill Silano



Harper's Bazaar, May 1964
'Chic Is'
Illustration by Jean Cocteau (originally published in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1937)



Harper's Bazaar, November 1964
'Nothing Personal': Richard Avedon/James Baldwin
Composite portrait by Richard Avedon



Sieff-
Silver Eye

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This summer, savor the cool, calm chic of the silver-seasoned eye. Ponder its particular luminescence (opposite), its limpid, lovely light-without-heat look, subtly glowing but never garish. Picture, now, the silvery, phosphorescent grace of a fish, darting swiftly beneath green blue seas. This is the misty, moist, aquatic sort of gleam we see on your eye, beginning right this minute.

It is not achieved, please note, by a few strokes of any silver shadow—and finis. This eye with its artful silver suggestion, takes more than a single color to create. The goal is to lighten and shade with such deliciously delicate shimmer (silvery green, silvery turquoise, silvery blue, silvery jade) that the eye seems twice as wide as it really is and at least four times as fetching.

The basic ingredient: Silver Smoke Eyeshadow by Helena Rubinstein—pewter colored on the stick, deeply silver-gleaming on the skin. With this, any of the following shades (depending on the personal trick of color magic you want to play): Silver Smoke with Mint Diamond gives off a diamondy, pale-as-dew-drops cast . . . looks devilishly dramatic with French blue . . . pure and spring green with True Emerald . . . brilliantly jeweled with Jade.

Your scheme for seasoning the silver eye should be, quite individually, your own. On some quiet morning soon, try two entirely different methods in front of your mirror, one for each eye—perhaps two distinct bands of color on the right and a gentle, harmonizing blend, accomplished with a fingertip, on the left.

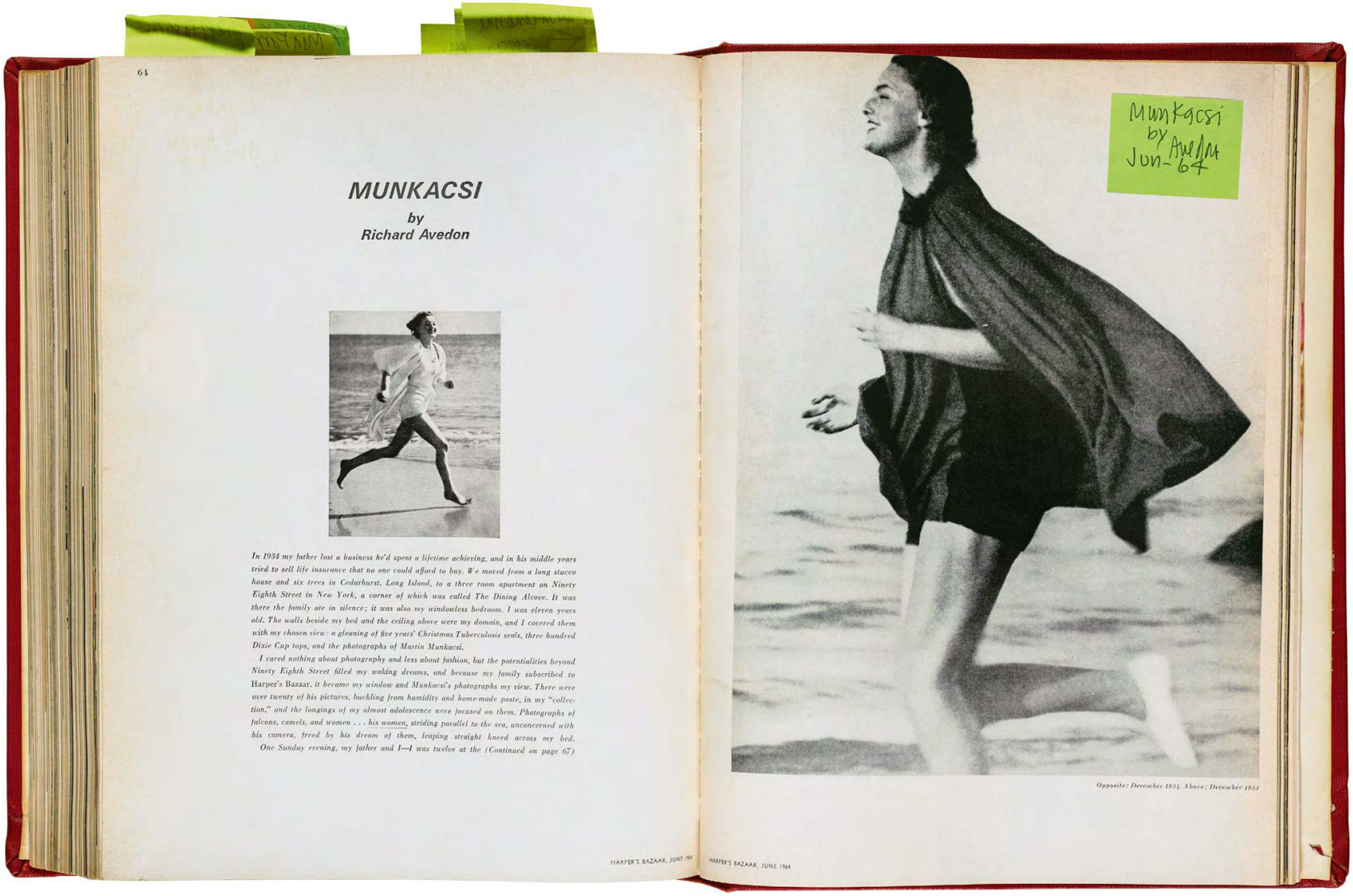
The most becoming technique will require, naturally, the embellishment of shiny, well-brushed eyebrows (the lighter the lid, the more important the brows become), the finishing touches of Long-Lash Mascara and a thin line of soft Eyeliner. Helena Rubinstein has also just now developed what she calls her Eyebrow Exclusive, a close-to-indispensible eyebrow attendant that contains an automatic Eyeliner Pencil (thinner and softer than the one for the brows) which stands in effectively for quick touch-ups. It also holds a pencil sharpener and an eyebrow brush.

Helena Rubinstein has still another interesting optical illusion up her sleeve. Called Conceal, it erases shadows underneath the eyes (or, for that matter, anywhere you please) as surely as a good night's sleep. Applied directly underneath the eyebrow, however, in a shade somewhat lighter than your natural skin, it accomplishes—with disarming naturalness—that extra "lift" that the eye, in its silver season, demands.

REFLECTIONS IN a silver eye

JEANLOUP SIEFF

Harper's Bazaar, May 1964
'Reflections in a Silver Eye'
Photograph by Jeanloup Sieff



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MUNKACSI

by
Richard Avedon

In 1934 my father lost a business he'd spent a lifetime achieving, and in his middle years tried to sell life insurance that no one could afford to buy. We moved from a long stucco house and six trees in Cedarhurst, Long Island, to a three room apartment on Ninety Eighth Street in New York, a corner of which was called The Dining Alcove. It was there the family ate in silence; it was also my windowless bedroom. I was eleven years old. The walls beside my bed and the ceiling above were my domain, and I covered them with my chosen view: a gleaning of five years' Christmas Tuberculosis seals, three hundred Dixie Cup tops, and the photographs of Martin Munkacsi.

I cared nothing about photography and less about fashion, but the potentialities beyond Ninety Eighth Street filled my waking dreams, and because my family subscribed to Harper's Bazaar, *it became my window and Munkacsi's photographs my view. There were over twenty of his pictures, buckling from humidity and home-made paste, in my "collection," and the longings of my almost adolescence were focused on them. Photographs of falcons, camels, and women . . . his women, striding parallel to the sea, unconcerned with his camera, freed by his dream of them, leaping straight kneed across my bed.*

One Sunday evening, my father and I—I was twelve at the *(Continued on page 67)*

HARPER'S BAZAAR, JUNE 1964

HARPER'S BAZAAR, JUNE 1964

Opposite: December 1934. Above: December 1932

Harper's Bazaar, June 1964
'Munkácsi' by Richard Avedon
Photographs by Martin Munkácsi

THE
POWER
OF
THE
PRINT

Elemental fury (opposite)—
fire, air and water bubbling
in motion. All pajamas
by Donald Brooks, in silk by Julian Tomchin
for Chardon-Marché. Charles Elkaim earrings.
Kaleidoscopic whirls
of tiny triangles (this page, above).

Dress by Tiffeau and Busch, in
Verron silk.
Sonic blast of color
(this page, below) breaking
in brilliant plumes. Pajames by
Tiffeau and Busch, in Onondaga silk.
Sandor Goldberger earrings.

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HIRO

Harper's Bazaar, February 1967
'The Power of the Print'
Photograph by Hiro

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IN PATOU'S bandit-hooded coat (right): soft white whipcord—diamond-stitched welt seaming; high, turnover collar, standing away from the throat to enclose a brown hood, topped by a white Commedia dell'Arte hat. Coat, in Prudhomme wool. At Bonwit Teller; I. Magnin. Patou's Joy perfume.

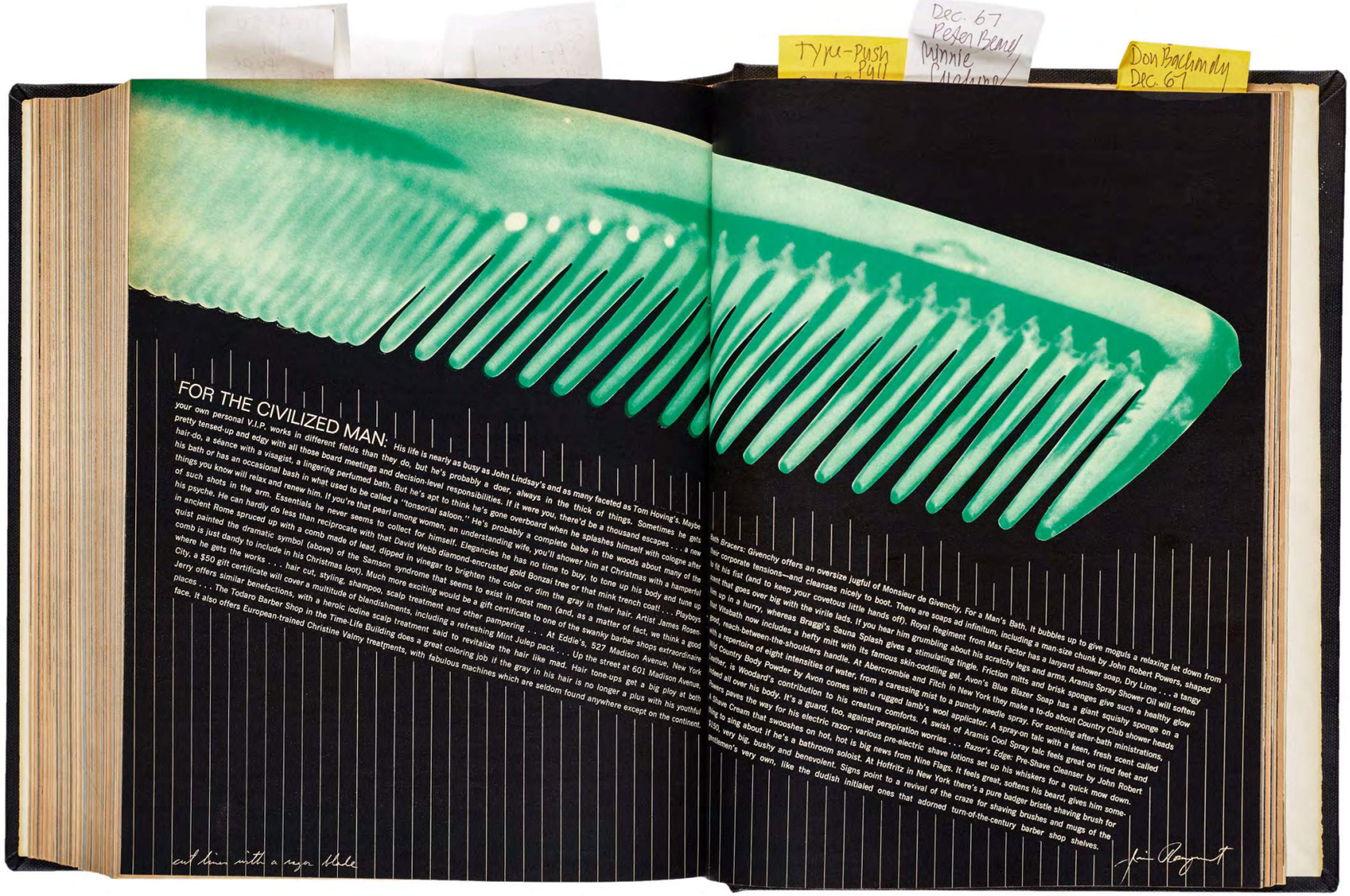
IN DIOR'S vital new volume coat (opposite), architecturally disciplined. Its fullness: sharply buttoned to the side, raised to a high, banded closing, arched in roomy raglan sleeves. Flame red Nattier wool. At Lord and Taylor; I. Magnin.

PARIS

THIS WOMAN IS YOU

DENZINGER COLLAGE MADE FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON

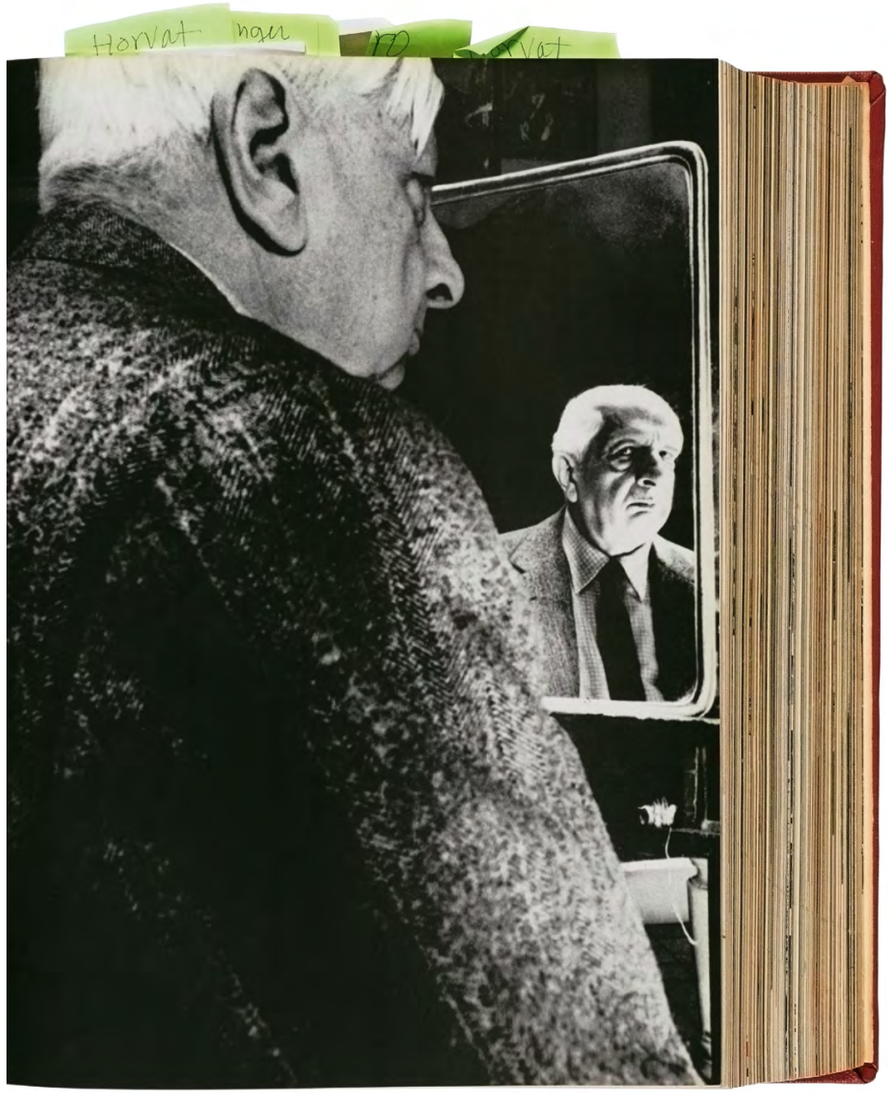
Harper's Bazaar, September 1965
'This Woman Is You'
Collage by Katerina Denzinger from photographs by Richard Avedon



FOR THE CIVILIZED MAN: His life is nearly as busy as John Lindsay's and as many faceted as Tom Hoving's. Maybe your own personal V.I.P. works in different fields than they do, but he's probably a doer, always in the thick of things. Sometimes he gets pretty tensed-up and edgy with all those board meetings and decision-level responsibilities. If it were you, there'd be a thousand escapes . . . a new hair-do, a séance with a visagist, a lingering perfumed bath. But he's apt to think he's gone overboard when he splashes himself with cologne after his bath or has an occasional bash in what used to be called a "tonsorial saloon." He's probably a complete babe in the woods about many of the things you know will relax and renew him. If you're that pearl among women, an understanding wife, you'll shower him at Christmas with a hamperful of such shots in the arm. Essentials he never seems to collect for himself. Elegancies he has no time to buy, to tone up his body and tune up his psyche. He can hardly do less than reciprocate with that David Webb diamond-encrusted gold Bonzai tree or that mink trench coat! . . . Playboys in ancient Rome spruced up with a comb made of lead, dipped in vinegar to brighten the color or dim the gray in their hair. Artist James Rosenquist painted the dramatic symbol (above) of the Samson syndrome that seems to exist in most men (and, as a matter of fact, we think a good comb is just dandy to include in his Christmas loot). Much more exciting would be a gift certificate to one of the swanky barber shops extraordinaire where he gets the works . . . hair cut, styling, shampoo, scalp treatment and other pampering . . . At Eddie's, 527 Madison Avenue, New York City, a $50 gift certificate will cover a multitude of blandishments, including a refreshing Mint Julep pack . . . Up the street at 601 Madison Avenue, Jerry offers similar benefactions, with a heroic iodine scalp treatment said to revitalize the hair like mad. Hair tone-ups get a big ploy at both places . . . The Todaro Barber Shop in the Time-Life Building does a great coloring job if the gray in his hair is no longer a plus with his youthful face. It also offers European-trained Christine Valmy treatments, with fabulous machines which are seldom found anywhere except on the continent.

Bath Bracers: Givenchy offers an oversize jugful of Monsieur de Givenchy, For a Man's Bath. It bubbles up to give moguls a relaxing let down from their corporate tensions—and cleanses nicely to boot. There are soaps ad infinitum, including a man-size chunk by John Robert Powers, shaped to fit his fist (and to keep your covetous little hands off). Royal Regiment from Max Factor has a lanyard shower soap, Dry Lime . . . a tangy scent that goes over big with the virile lads. If you hear him grumbling about his scratchy legs and arms, Aramis Spray Shower Oil will soften them up in a hurry, whereas Braggi's Sauna Splash gives a stimulating tingle. Friction mitts and brisk sponges give such a healthy glow that Vitabath now includes a hefty mitt with its famous skin-coddling gel. Avon's Blue Blazer Soap has a giant squishy sponge on a good, reach-between-the-shoulders handle. At Abercrombie and Fitch in New York they make a to-do about Country Club shower heads with a repertoire of eight intensities of water, from a caressing mist to a punchy needle spray. For soothing after-bath ministrations, Wild Country Body Powder by Avon comes with a rugged lamb's wool applicator. A spray-on talc with a keen, fresh scent called Leather, is Woodard's contribution to his creature comforts. A swish of Aramis Cool Spray talc feels great on tired feet and rubbed all over his body. It's a guard, too, against perspiration worries . . . Razor's Edge: Pre-Shave Cleanser by John Robert Powers paves the way for his electric razor; various pre-electric shave lotions set up his whiskers for a quick mow down. A Shave Cream that swooshes on hot, hot is big news from Nine Flags. It feels great, softens his beard, gives him something to sing about if he's a bathroom soloist. At Hoffritz in New York there's a pure badger bristle shaving brush for $35, very big, bushy and benevolent. Signs point to a revival of the craze for shaving brushes and mugs of the gentleman's very own, like the dudish initialed ones that adorned turn-of-the-century barber shop shelves.

Harper's Bazaar, December 1967
'For the Civilized Man'
Image by James Rosenquist



Harper's Bazaar, July 1966
Portrait of De Chirico
Photograph by Bill Brandt

Ruth Ansel's illustrious career in art direction is a story of talent and timing. Back in the 1960s, when Ruth was just 24, she and Bea Feitler became co-art directors of *Harper's Bazaar*, working alongside formidable fashion director Diana Vreeland and star photographer Richard Avedon. As we now know, it was the perfect moment to challenge and reinvent what a glossy fashion magazine could be, by exploring and presenting the myriad changes that were being played out in society and culture. Later, in 1974 – the year of the Watergate scandal – Ruth became art director of *The New York Times Magazine*, at a time when the power and influence of the American newspaper giants had never been greater. Then in the golden age of opulence that was the 1980s, Ruth went on to art direct that era's bible for successful living, *Vanity Fair*. And each time, she was the first woman in that position.

It was Dennis Freedman – long-time creative director of *W* magazine, and creative director of Barneys since 2011 – who suggested we feature Ruth Ansel in the pages of *System*. Having first met Ansel when he was a 20-something, aspiring magazine designer looking to find his way, Freedman says it was her presence, guidance and pioneering body of work that inspired him then, as with now, in his own stellar career. 'The first time I met Ruth was in her office in the Condé Nast building, where she was redesigining *House & Garden*. I was shown her mock-up of the newly designed magazine, and she asked me what I thought of it. I have no idea what I said. I just remember walking back out onto the street elated. With that simple gesture, Ruth had made me believe that my opinion counted.'

In the portfolio of Ruth Ansel's work that Freedman has curated for these pages – selected from Ansel's personal leather-bound archive volumes, complete with Post-its and annotations, which she keeps in her apartment on New York's Upper West Side – he chose to home in on Ansel's lesser-seen work from the *Harper's Bazaar* years. Beyond the era-defining covers she created with Avedon, Ansel collaborated closely with everyone from Guy Bourdin and Jeanloup Sieff to Andy Warhol and James Rosenquist, to Bill Brandt and Diane Arbus, Saul Leiter to Hiro. In doing so, she redefined what photography, illustration, artwork, text and blank space could perform on the page. Hers was a giddy and seductive world that seemed to take the notion of modernity, up its sticks, and plant it somewhere in the near future. Only to repeat the process 30 days later.

Looking at the work now, and listening to Ruth describe the times in which it was assembled, one is struck by the sheer sense of fearlessness and adventure she and her co-conspirators felt. In the same way that the 1960s saw humankind's tentative first steps in outer space, so Ruth Ansel's work was reaching beyond the accepted norms, in search of new truths. Much of what we see here has since been copied, emulated, updated. But how often is it surpassed?

In what ways did your childhood prep you for life in magazine publishing?
When I was a kid growing up in the Bronx there wasn't much to do in my neighbourhood except dream of getting out. I was introverted, enjoyed playing the piano, drawing and ice skating, not necessarily in that order. I had a much older brother and sister – we were 10 years apart – so I often felt I was growing up like an only child. From an early age I created imaginary playmates, and was drawn to performing; I'd read aloud in the confines of our tiny bathroom and practice losing my Bronx accent.

Were you exposed to much art or visual material at home?
Growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, I was a child of the movies, and the dark theatre was a refuge, a dream space, a source of inspiration and a way to escape into other people's fantasies.

'At Nina's house, de Kooning was painting his *Woman* series in their downstairs front room and Jackson Pollock would stop by for late-night dinner.'

Tell me some of your favourite films from your childhood.
Those directed by Michael Powell: *The Thief of Baghdad* and then *The Red Shoes*. I also loved *The Wizard of Oz*, *Singin' in the Rain*, George Stevens' *A Place in the Sun*, with Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift,[1] who was my 'movie love'! I saw the images on screen as single frames, moments in time, and considered them compelling narratives with an emotional impact – stories of beauty, of grace, of places to see, style and, later, of sexual freedom. Without my knowing it, those days spent watching movies had a lot to do with informing my later choices as a designer. Magazines like *Harper's Bazaar* were the closest thing to movies I could find, in that they were about telling stories through seductive imagery.

At what point did your visual world progress from the movies to art and graphic design?
I attended the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan,[2] which was a very advanced high school for creative kids. One of my classmates was Nina Castelli, whose parents were Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend,[3] the most formidable forces in the art world in America. Our friendship was a turning point in my life, because thanks to Nina's family I spent a summer as their guest in East Hampton when I was 15 years old. I'd never even been to anybody's house who had real paintings on the wall before, but at Nina's place Bill de Kooning was painting his *Woman* series in their downstairs front room, and Jackson Pollock would often stop by for late-night dinner with Larry Rivers[4] and Michael Sonnabend. I mean, it was quite amazing. Thanks to the Castellis I also saw my first Balanchine[5] ballet, my first Rauschenberg and Johns paintings, and my first Marisol[6] sculptures. Unsurprisingly, it was around that time that my love for art took root; the real rock stars in my life were Picasso and Matisse.

Were you interested in pursuing fine art as a career yourself?
I was a ceramic design major at Alfred University in upper New York State, but I wasn't a serious student. The idea of working hard to be an artist didn't make sense to me. I had this misconception that if you were really talented you wouldn't have to work hard, it would just come to you. I knew the odds of my being as successful as those giants I'd been exposed to with Nina, were minimal. So when it was time to leave university, I was like, 'How can I earn a living with this knowledge of art?' Somebody mentioned graphic art to me, even though I cared nothing about photography and less about fashion – apart from an obsession with Capezio[7] shoes – and I didn't really know what a graphic designer did. But the opportunity beyond my wildest dreams presented itself when I became an assistant designer in the *Harper's Bazaar* art department, under Marvin Israel.

How did you meet Marvin Israel?
I cold-called *Harper's Bazaar* about working in their art department because I'd always loved the magazine. I asked if the art director Henry Wolf[8] was there, and the person who answered said, 'No, Mr. Wolf's left the company, and he's been replaced by Marvin Israel'. Meeting Marvin was the greatest stroke of luck in my life. Although I didn't have a graphic-design portfolio he decided to take a risk and hire me as an assistant anyway. He liked the idea that I didn't have to 'unlearn' graphic-design clichés. Bea Feitler – his protégé and star pupil from Parsons – had been hired a month earlier, so the whole *Bazaar* art department was just the three of us.

What did *Harper's Bazaar* represent culturally at the time?
Historically speaking, *Harper's Bazaar* had claimed a certain cultural position, mostly because the intention of the magazine in its early days was to idealize everything. A fashion photographer was not to show what the local trends on the street were; he was to idealize the woman, whatever she wore, and however she lived. The idealized woman was remote and removed. By the time I joined the magazine in 1961, it was evident that the whole social value system had begun to dissolve and would require a new vision.

How was it, entering into the life of *Bazaar* at such a young age?
My first few months were a disaster. My layouts were terrible and I was convinced I was going to get fired. But Marvin refused to let me quit and often drove me crazy, insisting that I stay many nights and get it done. His standards for design excellence were non-negotiable – he'd been a student of Brodovitch[9] – and it was the beginning of an important relationship that shaped my deep respect for both photography and for Marvin. Despite the devastating criticism he'd often dish out, I'm still learning what he taught me to this day.

So you were really learning on the job.
Well, I wasn't even smart enough to say to myself, 'You better find out about the history of graphic design and of magazines'. It was Marvin who said, 'You gotta go to the library and look at those bound issues of *Bazaar* from the 1930s and 1940s'. Thankfully I did, because I discovered the brilliant work of people like Martin Munkácsi, Cartier-Bresson, Bill Brandt, Cocteau and Man Ray. I grew to understand that the special qualities these photographers and artists possessed came from embracing their respective individual passions.

'By the time I joined *Harper's Bazaar* in 1961, it was evident that the whole social value system had begun to dissolve and would require a new vision.'

Their intentions were to reveal and expose a hidden aspect of character through portraiture – conceptualized character could be anything of their making. In the context of the magazine, it became a more idealized woman. Suddenly, it struck me that my love for art and artists could be relevant in the setting of a fashion magazine

Which particular images or photographers left their mark on you?
Munkácsi, more than any other photographer, revolutionized the way women looked in *Bazaar*. He freed them up to run and jump and express their emotions through movement. As Dick Avedon, who credited Munkácsi with having influenced his work, said, 'He brought a taste for happiness and honesty and a love of women to what was, before him, a joyless, loveless, lying art. Today the world of what is called fashion is peopled with Munkácsi's babies, his heirs ... the art of Munkácsi lay in what he wanted life to be, and he wanted it to be splendid, and it was.' I remember one day though, a dishevelled old man in a wrinkled raincoat came into the *Bazaar* office; he was a mess – all bent over and not very attractive – and I just thought, 'Eurgh!' It was Munkácsi who'd come to see Marvin about an assignment, because he needed money. He died penniless in 1963, and that was a really big lesson for me: I never got the chance to meet Munkácsi because I'd been so smug and judgemental.

Marvin Israel comes across as a rather formidable character.
Well, he had a monstrously unstable personality. He could scream at people he didn't like. He used to throw editors out of his office. They'd be there to talk about a layout and he'd just shout, 'Get the fuck out of here!' When Marvin and Dick became this duo, they were like bad little children making mischief against anybody.

What was his relationship to art and photography?
Marvin was an accomplished painter whose sensibility about the contemporary visual world was extensive. He understood how to create that world as the times were changing and how to bring it into a more modern context. He'd commission Robert Frank and Diane Arbus and place their portfolios right opposite the extremely fancy uptown-fashion pages, and that is what made it glorious. Marvin was Arbus' mentor and brought Diane into the magazine. The first portfolio I ever worked on was Diane Arbus' *The Full Circle* – it was her pictures of all these very weird downtown New Yorkers.

How did you go from being Marvin Israel's assistant to becoming *Bazaar*'s co-art director with Bea Feitler.
One day in 1963 Marvin had a huge fight with the magazine's editor in chief Nancy White over a Dick Avedon cover. Diana Vreeland was the fashion editor of *Bazaar* at the time, and I think that Dick was very angry that the job had gone to Nancy – who was a white-gloved Catholic lady and the niece of [one-time *Bazaar* editor in chief] Carmel Snow, instead of Vreeland. Because Marvin and Dick were naughty boys, they shot this cover with a model called Danielle Weil, who looked suspiciously like Diana Vreeland – nothing like your typical pretty and glamorous model. To make matters worse, Nancy thought it was a man in drag, so she wanted to kill the cover. Marvin went ballistic and told Nancy to go fuck herself and she fired him. Suddenly Bea and I found ourselves the art directors. It was a strategic move by the powers that be, who were biding time until they could find a suitable – male – replacement. I would've liked to know what was said and by whom to eventually convince Nancy White and Diana Vreeland to wait and see how we got on instead of firing us. My guess is it had to be Dick [Avedon]. He was a powerful influence at the magazine, and everyone listened to him. Don't forget, this was a photographer who had already had much financial success as well as name recognition – the Hollywood movie *Funny Face* was about Avedon, with Fred Astaire as the photographer 'Dick Avery' – so I think his radical suggestion intrigued everyone. Looking back, I give the *Bazaar* folks lots of credit for taking a chance on two untested young girls. It was never once discussed with Dick, and I regret that I never properly thanked him then or later on.

What were your impressions of Avedon when you began working with him?
Dick was pivotal in my life, from the moment I stepped off the elevator in the old *Bazaar* building to the moment he died in 2004. He had a boyish slender build, a handsome face, infectious laugh, and endless energy. Ultimately,

'Nancy thought Avedon's cover image was a man in drag, so she wanted to kill it. Marvin went ballistic and told Nancy to go fuck herself, and she fired him.'

he viewed his profession as a calling. Dick was much more than a photographer at the time; he was a revolutionary with a camera, because his intention was to do what had never been seen before. He loved the whole process of picture making: it started with thinking of the image he wanted to create, taking the pictures, printing them in his own studio, making ravishing prints that every other photographer envied, going to the presses, finding out about special inks, making magazine layouts, working on books, creating exhibitions, and teaching a workshop of young photographers as a continuation of Brodovitch's legacy.

What about Diana Vreeland?
The thing I really loved about Mrs. Vreeland was that she could be reverential towards the likes of Dior and Givenchy and Madame Grès – to her, they were as great as any sculptor or painter – but also immediately recognize Courrèges, this futuristic designer who broke the Paris fashion-world traditions. She adored the young; she got energy from them and never saw them as separate to her world. I mean, she was singularly responsible for putting women all over America in go-go boots and micro minis. Marvin told me this story about how he was talking to Mrs. Vreeland and she looked out of the window, and pointed down to Fifth Avenue, and she said, 'Marvin, you see those women in those boots, I made them!'

Do you think you and Bea Feitler appealed to Diana Vreeland because you were so young and 'new'?
Yes, I think so. I remember once I was stuck for an idea with what to do with some pictures of this big bag, which was supposed to be worn over the shoulder. I went back into our art department cubby-hole and started to blow up a picture of the bag over a full double spread, and then took it to Mrs. Vreeland. She went crazy with happiness, because something that was unexpected, that changed the scale and that changed the status quo, made her very excited.

What did you learn from working with these older figures at *Bazaar*?
Vreeland, Avedon and Israel – the holy trinity! No matter how talented they were – and they were enormously talented, obviously – they worked harder than anybody. That was a revelation to me, as I was a pretty lazy kid. Secondly, they showed me how to stand up to conservative forces within the magazine by trying to do something new that would challenge the status quo.

Can you give me an example.
Sometimes I knew I had to risk taking a chance on an unexpected talent. Lee Friedlander wasn't an obvious choice of photographer at the time, especially when it came to commissioning him to take photographs of the new shiny sexy American cars of the 1960s. Cars were icons of glamour and fashion, and I wanted to give Lee complete freedom to do whatever he felt like doing. And he did. He shot them on the streets of small towns, near burger joints, gas stations, along main street. When he sent in the photos, I loved them and made dummy layouts. The editors weren't pleased though; Lee was paid for his work and the photos were returned unpublished, in the same yellow box he sent them in. The best part of the story is time proved my instincts right: *The New Cars 1964* was published, and Lee's pictures finally got the recognition they deserved.

How often did those kind of risky commissions actually get published?
One example that springs to mind came later in my magazine career, when I was art director of *House & Garden* magazine. Someone came up with the idea of featuring Graceland, Elvis Presley's home in Tennessee, and I persuaded William Eggleston to photograph it. I didn't know him at all, but I thought it was worth a try, so I picked up the phone. At first he hated the idea; he thought it was beneath him and refused, but many phone conversations later he agreed and those pictures became some of the most celebrated colour images he ever produced.

Just to go back to *Bazaar* in the 1960s. Can you give me a snapshot of what it was like in New York at the time, and how that influenced your work at the magazine?
We were young and fearless. We thought we could go anywhere and do anything for fun, and did. New York was a free-spirited place if you were curious and energetic; the atmosphere was electric, and cocaine and speed were the drugs of choice, even though a lot of people like Edie Sedgewick would later have their lives destroyed by the excesses of the time. The art scene was centred in New York, and artists ruled.

'Avedon, Bea and I attempted to conceptualize something entirely new: to change the nature and structure of what a fashion magazine could be.'

I'd go to my friends' art openings and happenings on Thursday nights, and I'd often hang out at Max's Kansas City[10] where the Velvet Underground and Nico would perform. The place was filled with experimental sounds, and untrained voices, singing, reading concrete poetry. John Chamberlain, Larry Rivers and Jim Rosenquist held court together with Andy [Warhol] and his art posse. Uptown art groupies led by 'Baby Jane' Holzer[11] became downtown hippy camp followers. Everything that was happening felt new and accessible and we were a part of it. It was the source of many of the ideas I brought back to the magazine.

I guess that whole scene informed your work on the celebrated April 1965 Avedon 'Pop' issue of *Bazaar*.
That year was kind of the crowning glory of everything for Dick and for us, in the sense that things were changing in the world. There was rock'n'roll, there was the pill, sexual freedom was the latest thing, and youth had taken over. Everything that we were doing, every kind of art and every kind of writing, it was all about young people. And on top of all that, it was the time of space exploration. Dick understood all that context, as only he could, so he said to *Bazaar*, 'I want to do an entire issue, I want to be the editor and the sole photographer', and he was.

How did you put the issue together?
More than any other, that issue showed my ability to capture change as it was happening. Dick Avedon, Bea and I attempted for the last time in the history of American fashion magazines to conceptualize a new magazine; to change the nature and the structure of what a fashion magazine could be. Until then it was a question of, 'This section is for fashion, and this section is for features'. We wanted it all integrated, in strange ways, and to change the nature of how you took in the information. It was daring for its time, a fashion magazine that combined the power of a massive youth movement, pop culture, space exploration and new literary voices. The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Jasper Johns and Bob Rauschenberg were photographed on the streets and in the studios of New York. At that time people who were walking the streets were dressed so much in advance of the things shown in fashion magazines. Dick went to London to photograph leading Mods who were changing the face of fashion. Outrageous fantasy concepts turned up throughout the issue. We used new Day-Glo inks on our presses, and even a shiny silver ink to depict hair flying around to the beat of disco music. I called up many of my art-world friends like Warhol – who photographed the issue's contributors in a Photomat – Lichtenstein, George Segal and Claes Oldenburg. Stan Vanderbeek,[12] the underground filmmaker, created an original double-spread montage collage. Renata Adler and Tom Wolfe were contributing writers. We got permission from NASA to put model Jean Shrimpton in an astronaut space suit, and called it 'the first woman in space'.

That image in particular feels like a perfect snapshot of the time – the convergence of fashion, Avedon, Jean Shrimpton, pop art, and space travel.
It was called 'Galactic Beauty' and it opened the issue's main portfolio. The final collage came about because Dick wasn't satisfied with the results of shooting Shrimpton in the space suit against no-seam paper in the studio. He felt it looked boring – especially for the issue's opening spread – and he was right. He turned to me and put me on the spot: 'Please come up with something.' I didn't know what to do, but because I was such a pop-art fan, and knew Roy Lichtenstein and Andy as friends, I had an unconscious flash. I ran out of the building, went to every nearby store that sold comic books, bought up as many as I could find, and ran back to the *Bazaar* art department. And there it was. That single magnificent outer-space panel jumped out at me and I quickly had it blown up. Everything fitted and worked perfectly: the scale, the colour, the black sky with the white stars, the drawing of the spaceships, the movement of the comic-book rings, all came together behind Shrimpton's beautiful face. I showed the collage to Dick and he immediately jumped for joy and said, 'You did it, this is perfect, let's do it'. No hesitation. The final collage was made and off it went to the printer. The only thing I now regret these many years later is that I never kept the original comic book, nor did we properly credit the wonderful artist who drew that panel. That artist saved me. So thank you, whoever you are.

How was the issue received?
It was a total failure in terms of the suits;

'The reaction from the suits in charge was so negative that Mrs. Vreeland left for *Vogue*, Avedon followed her, and I went to *The New York Times*.'

they really hated it. We dared to photograph the first young black model – Donyale Luna[13] – wearing an expensive Galanos[14] couture gown. No high-fashion magazine in America had ever run a photo of a black model in expensive fashion up until then. They had only run black models in less expensive clothes – that was code for 'acceptable' – but not in couture. In other words, this was an insidious form of segregation, which all fashion magazines practised. We wanted to break with that shameful tradition. The reaction of the publisher William Randolph Hearst, Jr. was completely negative. This devastated us. Mrs. Vreeland left. Shortly after, Dick followed her to *Vogue* and several years later, Bea left for *Ms.* magazine, and then I later left for *The New York Times Magazine*.

It was too daring for the time.
To put it in perspective, 1965 was a watershed year for civil rights. Martin Luther King marched over the bridge to Selma, Alabama, and Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Nevertheless, the issue was a financial disaster and many readers criticized it. Hearst had begun to be concerned with the economics of the market and was not interested in daring and inventive concepts. But the cover won the highest award in the New York Art Directors Show, and has been reproduced in graphic annuals throughout the world.

You'd mentioned earlier that Marvin Israel was extremely demanding. How would you describe your own style of working, dealing with photographers?
I do what I do pretty intuitively. I know at times I'm demanding, impatient and never satisfied. I often let that show when working with colleagues and photographers. I'm not a screamer like some, but I used to get very moody and intense and shut down. Now because time is so precious I've dropped the 'moody' and kept the 'intense' part. But it's all about caring so much you want to get it right, so you're willing to fight for it. If your work has any value it will outlive any of those gossipy tales of bad behaviour – so always reach for something beyond your grasp, show respect, and recognize it's not all about 'you'.

What in your opinion, does a good art director do?
An art director at best is a catalyst for change responding to evolution in all areas of culture. I like to challenge everyone's comfort zone, especially my own. I think predictability in magazines has become the rule and I'm completely for the opposite. I like readers to be provoked, disturbed, even outraged. Often it's the defects that are worth celebrating. It's never about perfection. Finding out what doesn't work isn't failure – it's a way of eventually finding out what does work. Finally, what I really like most about art directing magazines is that they are always a work in progress. Another issue is over and it's on to the next and the next ... you just keep going.

1. After building a reputation on stage in New York, Montgomery Clift (1920-1966) moved to Hollywood and was nominated for his first Oscar in 1951. On May 12, 1956, he crashed his car and the subsequent injuries required extensive plastic surgery and left him in permanent pain. After a decade self-medicating with drink and drugs, he had a heart attack on July 22, 1966, and died in his sleep.

2. The High School of Music and Art was set up by New York mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia in 1936. Alumni include Milton Glaser, Reynold Ruffins and Edward Sorel (co-founders of Push Pin Studios), Erica Jong and Slick Rick.

3. Leo Castelli, Ileana Sonnabend and Michael Sonnabend were three of the best-known art dealers of the inter- and post-war era. Leo and Ileana were married from 1931 until 1959; Ileana then married Michael Sonnabend, and moved to Paris. Castelli became the New York gallerist for the greats of Abstract Expressionism (de Kooning, Pollock, Rauschenberg), while the Sonnabends introduced pop art to Europe by supporting, among others, Warhol, Lichtenstein, Donald Judd and Jim Dine. The Sonnabends returned to New York in the early 1970s, and Ileana began collaborating with her ex-husband.

4. Larry Rivers (né Yitzroch Loiza Grossberg in 1923) was a multitalented artist and a founding member of the pop-art movement. At the height of his fame, he was described as the 'cleverest, even the foxiest, painter at work in the country'. He died in 2002.

5. George Balanchine (1904-1983) was a Russian-born choreographer whose revolutionary work changed the language of classical ballet.

6. French-born sculptor Marisol Escobar was known for incorporating casts of her own body parts and face into her work, for example, in *The Party* (1965-1966). She died in April 2016.

7. Capezio originally made dance shoes, but their styles became fashionable after being featured on the cover of US *Vogue* in 1949.

8. Henry Wolf (1925-2005) was a Vienna-born, New York-based art director at *Esquire* and *Harper's Bazaar* in the 1950s and 1960s. He was known for his use of type and conceptual illustration. He once said, 'A magazine should not only reflect a trend; it should help start it'. He later moved into advertising.

9. Alexey Brodovitch (1898-1971) was a legendary graphic designer and photographer, who art directed *Harper's Bazaar* for nearly 25 years. He inspired the character Dovitch in Stanley Donan's film *Funny Face*.

10. Nightclub Max's Kansas City opened in New York in 1965 and was a favourite haunt of artists and musicians until its closure in 1982.

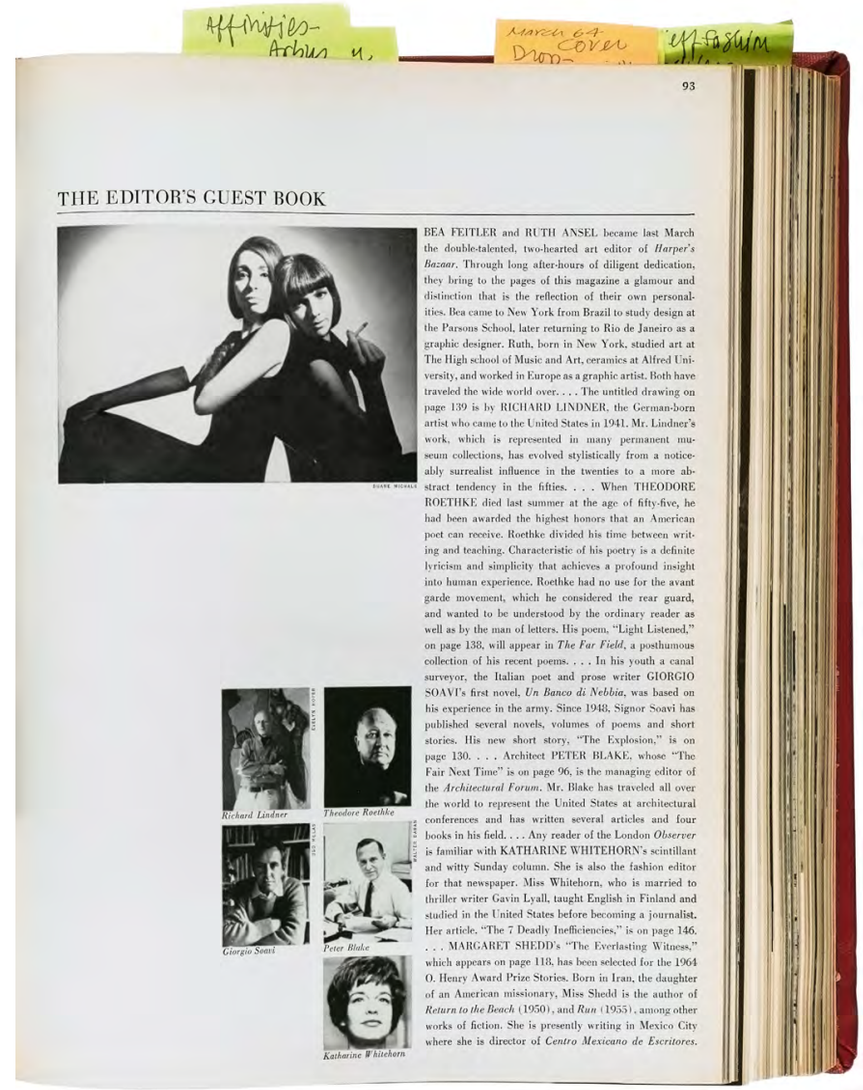
11. In 1964, 'Baby Jane' Holzer was a young society wife. Then she met Andy Warhol and became one of his first 'superstars'. In his short film, *Screen Test*, she brushes her teeth for three-and-a-half minutes.

12. Stan Vanderbeek was an underground filmmaker who began his career shooting surrealist collages.

13. When Donyale Luna appeared on the cover of British *Vogue* in March 1966, she became the first black cover girl of a major fashion magazine. She died of a drug overdose in Italy aged 33.

14. Couturier James Galanos trained in Paris and New York and set up shop in Los Angeles. He was awarded a Council of Fashion Designers of America Lifetime Achievement Award in 1985.

Photographer: Mark Davis. Special thanks: Tom Smith



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THE EDITOR'S GUEST BOOK

BEA FEITLER and RUTH ANSEL became last March the double-talented, two-hearted art editor of *Harper's Bazaar*. Through long after-hours of diligent dedication, they bring to the pages of this magazine a glamour and distinction that is the reflection of their own personalities. Bea came to New York from Brazil to study design at the Parsons School, later returning to Rio de Janeiro as a graphic designer. Ruth, born in New York, studied art at The High school of Music and Art, ceramics at Alfred University, and worked in Europe as a graphic artist. Both have traveled the wide world over. . . . The untitled drawing on page 139 is by RICHARD LINDNER, the German-born artist who came to the United States in 1941. Mr. Lindner's work, which is represented in many permanent museum collections, has evolved stylistically from a noticeably surrealist influence in the twenties to a more abstract tendency in the fifties. . . . When THEODORE ROETHKE died last summer at the age of fifty-five, he had been awarded the highest honors that an American poet can receive. Roethke divided his time between writing and teaching. Characteristic of his poetry is a definite lyricism and simplicity that achieves a profound insight into human experience. Roethke had no use for the avant garde movement, which he considered the rear guard, and wanted to be understood by the ordinary reader as well as by the man of letters. His poem, "Light Listened," on page 138, will appear in *The Far Field*, a posthumous collection of his recent poems. . . . In his youth a canal surveyor, the Italian poet and prose writer GIORGIO SOAVI's first novel, *Un Banco di Nebbia*, was based on his experience in the army. Since 1948, Signor Soavi has published several novels, volumes of poems and short stories. His new short story, "The Explosion," is on page 130. . . . Architect PETER BLAKE, whose "The Fair Next Time" is on page 96, is the managing editor of the *Architectural Forum*. Mr. Blake has traveled all over the world to represent the United States at architectural conferences and has written several articles and four books in his field. . . . Any reader of the London *Observer* is familiar with KATHARINE WHITEHORN's scintillant and witty Sunday column. She is also the fashion editor for that newspaper. Miss Whitehorn, who is married to thriller writer Gavin Lyall, taught English in Finland and studied in the United States before becoming a journalist. Her article, "The 7 Deadly Inefficiencies," is on page 146. . . . MARGARET SHEDD's "The Everlasting Witness," which appears on page 118, has been selected for the 1964 O. Henry Award Prize Stories. Born in Iran, the daughter of an American missionary, Miss Shedd is the author of *Return to the Beach* (1950), and *Run* (1955), among other works of fiction. She is presently writing in Mexico City where she is director of *Centro Mexicano de Escritores*.

Richard Lindner
Theodore Roethke
Giorgio Soavi
Peter Blake
Katharine Whitehorn

Harper's Bazaar, February 1964
'The Editor's Guest Book': Bea Feitler and Ruth Ansel
Photograph by Duane Michals

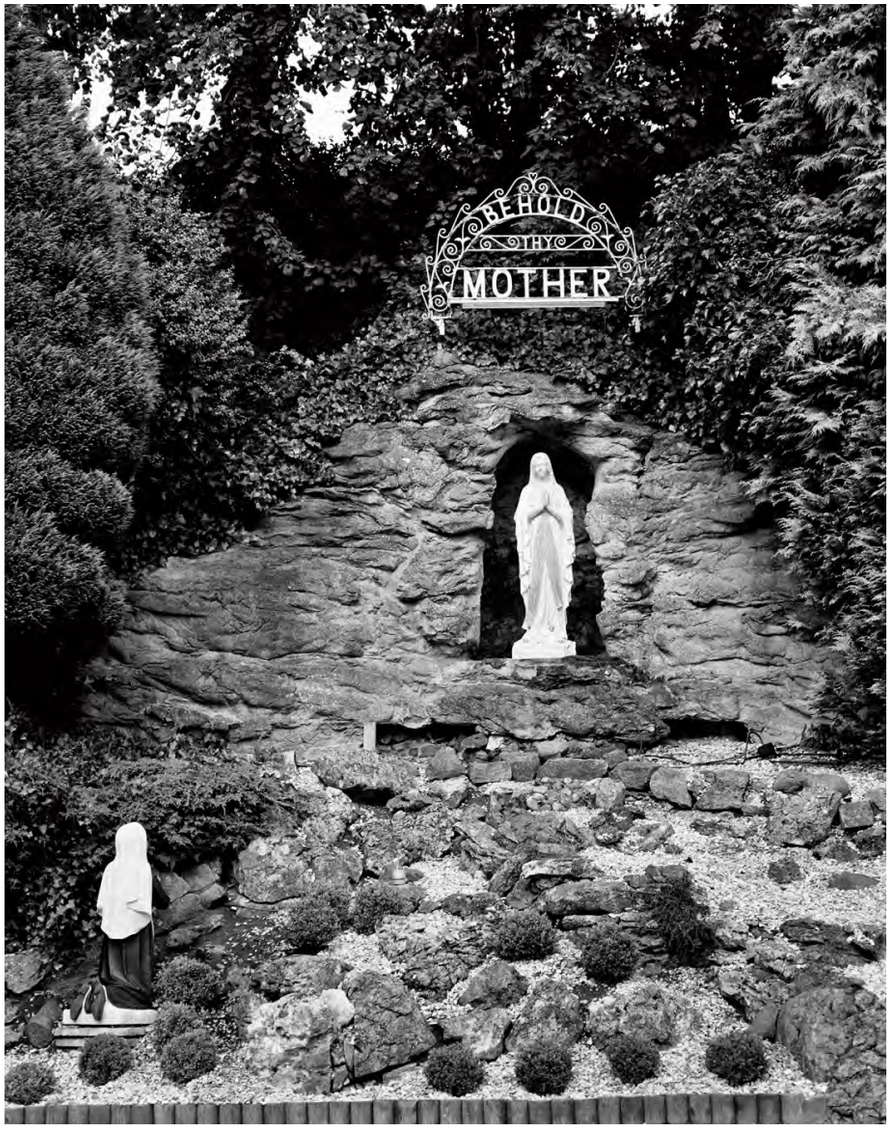
‘It’s just normal life, but I find it beautiful.’

The autobiographical themes and inspirations for a decade of Christopher Kane.

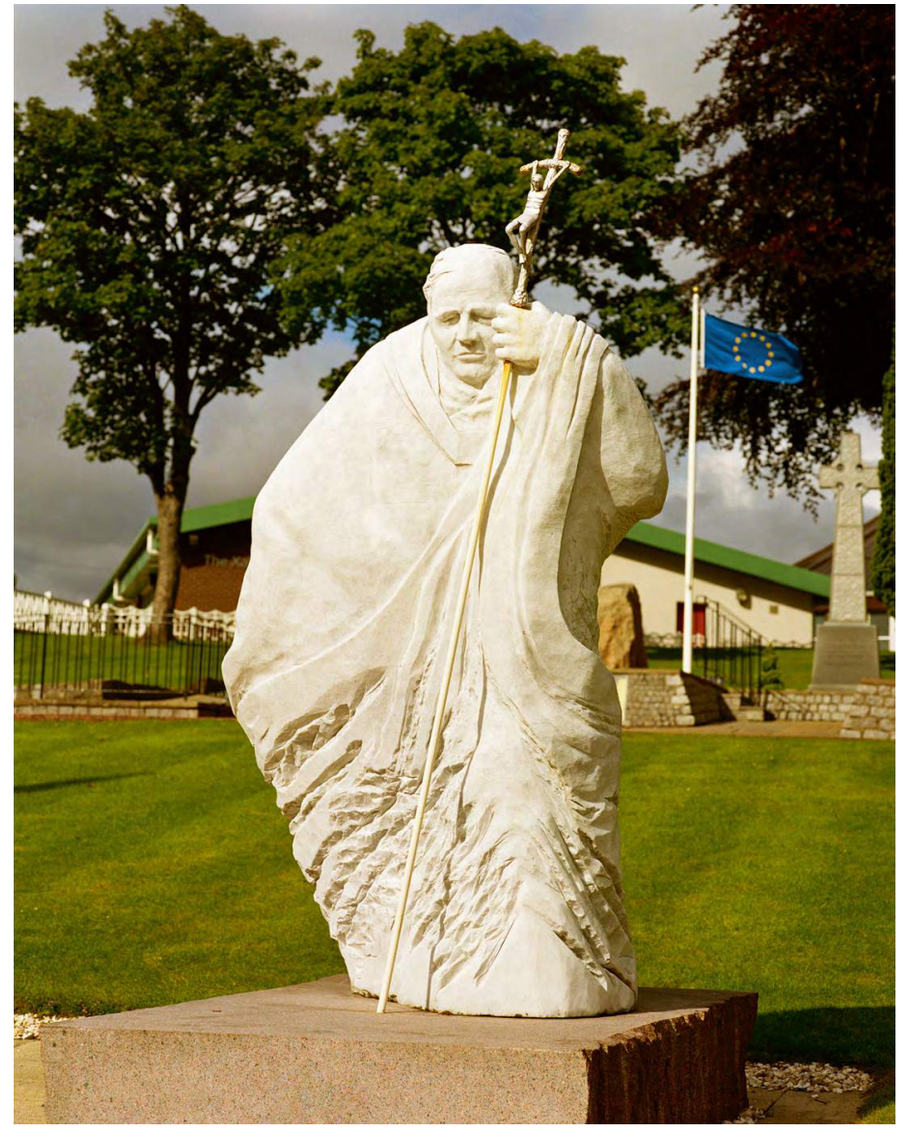
By Jo-Ann Furniss
Photographs by Alasdair McLellan

Previous page: Bonnie, Tammy Kane's Cabbage Patch Doll
Christopher Kane Spring/Summer 2014

Big Apple ride at M&D's ('Scotland's Theme Park'), Motherwell



Carfin Grotto, Carfin



Carfin Grotto, Carfin

Barrowland Ballroom, Glasgow

Karolina Laczkowska in Spring/Summer 2017

Christopher Kane prototype Crocs, Spring/Summer 2017

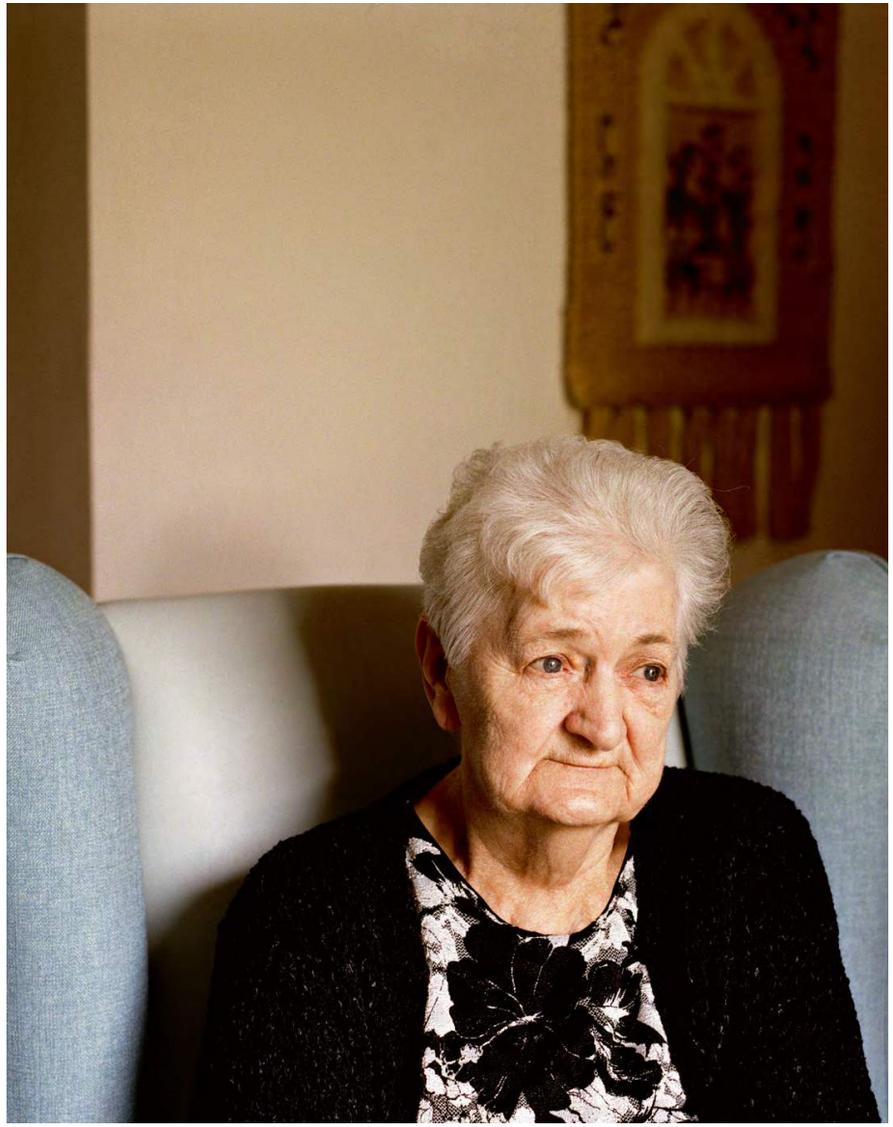
Auntie Sandra

'Pitch and toss' game, M&D's ('Scotland's Theme Park'), Motherwell

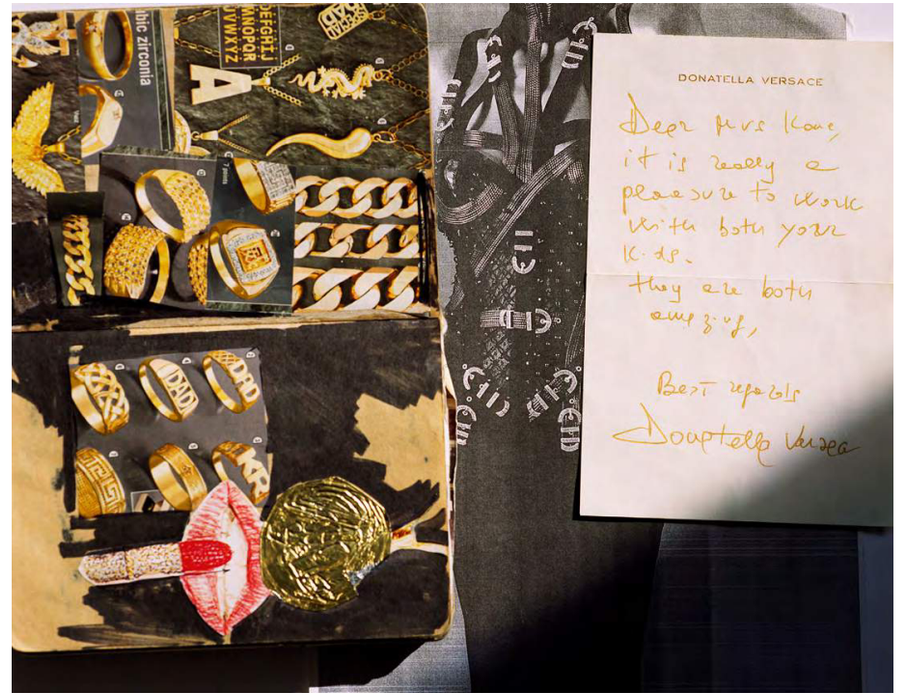
Christopher Kane Spring/Summer 2011

Kane family pictures:
Christopher Kane as Bugsy Malone
Tammy Kane in a first communion outfit

Kane family pictures:
Christine and Thomas Kane
The Aunties and Granny Irvine



Auntie Mary



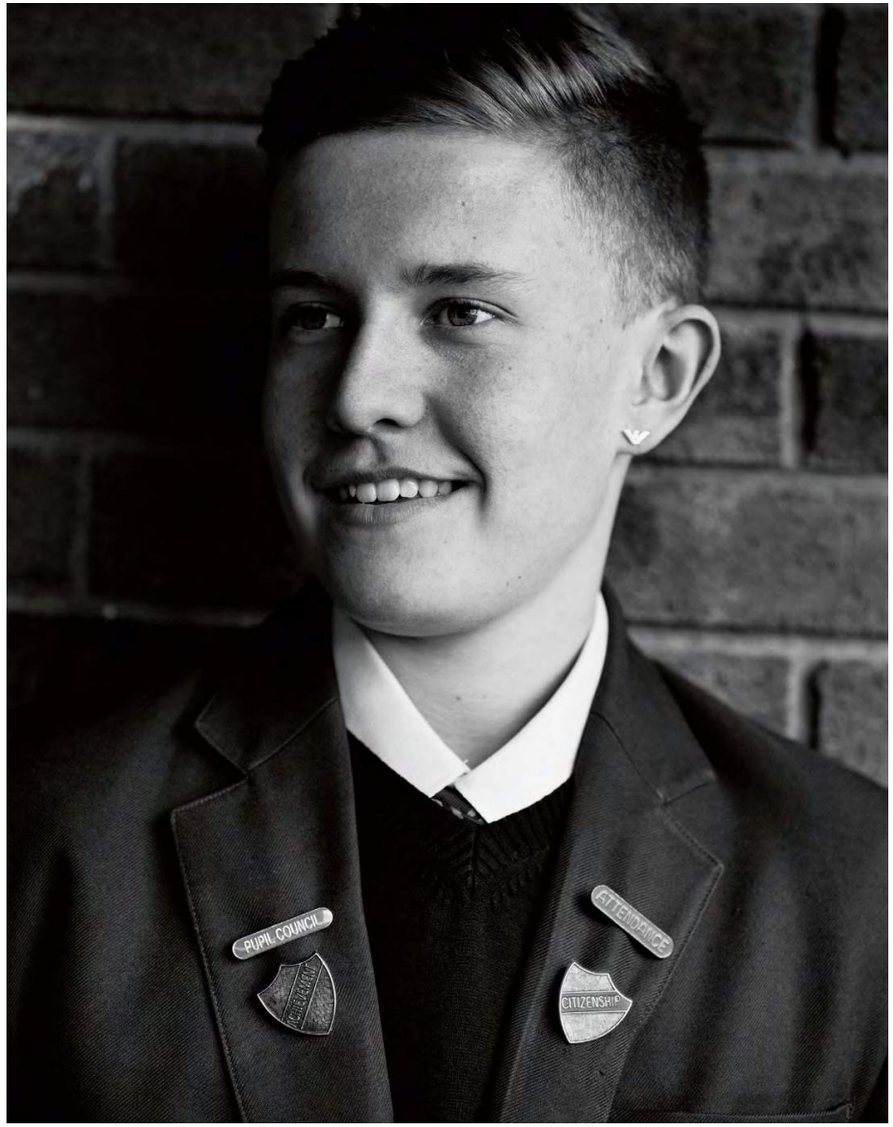
Christopher Kane's college workbook and a letter to Christine Kane from Donatella Versace

Dress from Christopher Kane's MA graduation collection , March 2006

Flying Jumbos ride, M&D's ('Scotland's Theme Park'), Motherwell

Kane family pictures

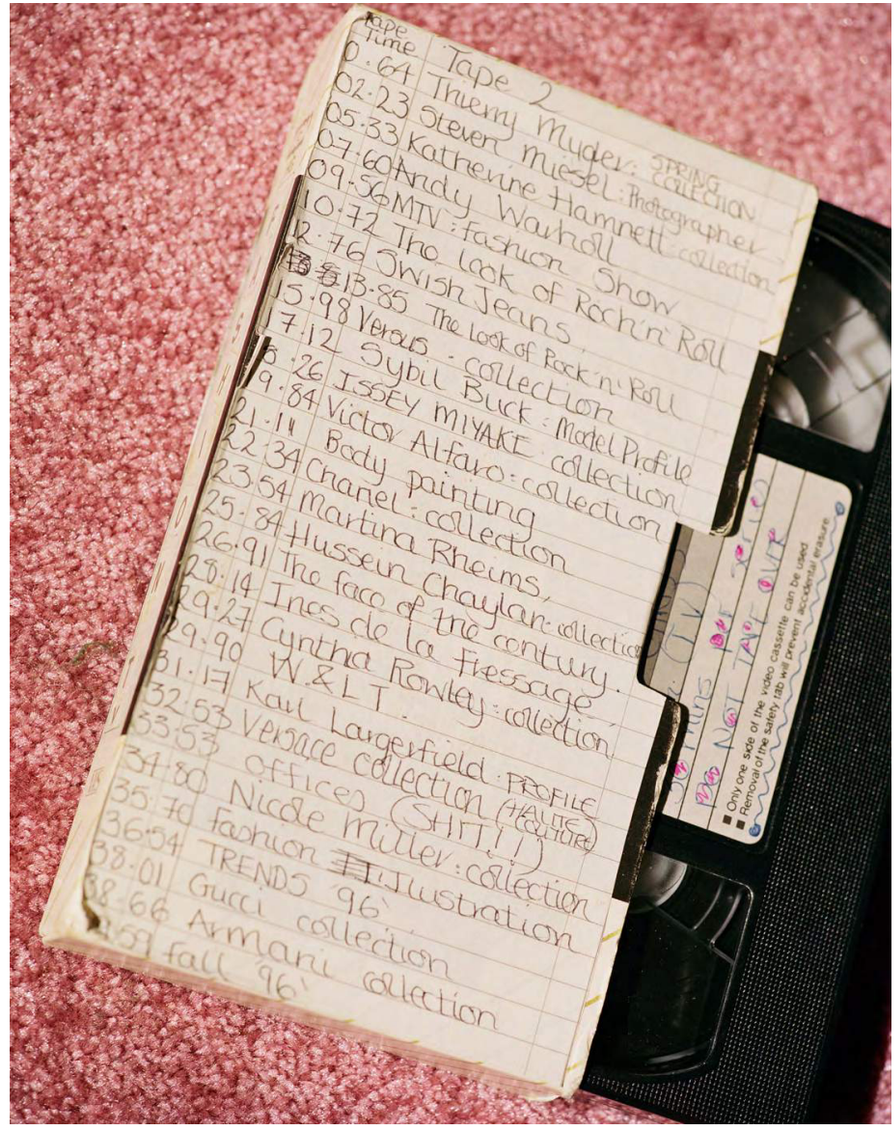
The grave of Thomas and Christine Kane, Christopher and Tammy Kane's parents, Airbles Cemetery, Motherwell



Pupil at Taylor High School, Motherwell, the Roman Catholic secondary school attended by Christopher and Tammy Kane

Carfin Grotto, Carfin

Jamie Bochert in Autumn/Winter 2016



Christopher Kane's childhood fashion-TV videotape

Tanz, tanning salon, Motherwell

'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' 1 Corinthians 13:11

This is not the case for Christopher Kane. In fact, both Christopher and Tammy Kane refuse to put away childish things in what they do. In the 10 years that their label has existed, a distinct autobiographical element has emerged in the collections, with seasons functioning as chapters. And much of this autobiography is devoted to the pair's personal childhood experiences and obsessions.

For example, a collection like Spring/Summer 2013's homage to Frankenstein's monster and the rest of the Universal Studios ghouls might be traced back to being frightened to death by their Auntie Mary's stories of ghosts or Auntie Sandra allowing them to watch *The Exorcist* at far too early an age. That past also means that Christopher Kane still cannot go to a fun fair and enter a haunted house or ride a ghost train without becoming a hysterical, nervous wreck.

Tammy Kane could be seen as a little more level-headed – although maybe not much more. It is no coincidence that Tammy's childhood Cabbage Patch doll is called Bonnie, and so is her five-year-old daughter. 'The Cabbage Patch doll is actually in the office through there,' Kane says of his sister's toy, indicating the adjoining room where she works. Tammy Kane is the most important influence in Christopher's life. His design process is like a literary stream of consciousness or an interior monologue, transformed into a dialogue by Tammy's presence. She is intrinsic to the shaping of these collections. She is five years older, but the two have a symbiotic relationship, more like twins, bouncing ideas off each other and developing them. There is a story that Christopher tells about his sister: Once, when Tammy was asked why her name isn't part of the label, she replied, 'It is. My name is Kane'.

Christopher Kane always knew he was going to be a fashion designer. 'I don't know when I decided,' he says. 'I just knew that is what I would do, for as long as I can remember.' Later, when he was at school, he saw a television programme featuring London's Central Saint Martins. 'That's when I decided, "I'm going there!"' he says, adding, 'Where would I be without television? I wouldn't have known anything about the outside world without it.' A carefully curated videotape, full of distinct fashion moments from the 1990s, was compiled by Kane as a young teenager and is still one of his most prized possessions.

Christopher Kane was a working class Scottish kid from Motherwell, an unprepossessing former steel town midway between Glasgow and Edinburgh, which fell on hard times and then fell back on call centres after the closure of the Ravenscraig steelworks in 1992. Considering his background, both the decision to be a fashion designer and the aim to train at Saint Martins was quite unusual, with the odds against him achieving either of these ambitions. Yet those odds did not take into account his talent, wilful determination and devotion to fashion. He always knew where he was going. He eventually completed his foundation course, BA and MA at the college. When he finally graduated with his Master's in 2006, he was widely hailed as the star student. He has since gone on to define London fashion more than any other designer of the past decade.

Starting with his MA collection – which garnered widespread media attention and crucial support in the fashion industry – the Kane signature appeared fully formed and was completely characteristic of what was to come. Those stretch lace dresses even appear, unaltered apart from coloration, in the Spring/Summer 2017 collection. 'For a collection, we usually start poor and then it progresses to the opposite at the end,' says Christopher Kane.

'It annoys me when people say that it's bad taste turned good. It isn't – I've always found these things beautiful. It's just normal life.'

'But it's the same girl throughout – she travels a long way. It annoys me when people say that it's bad taste turned good. It isn't – I've always found these things beautiful. It's normal life. My MA collection was based on child beauty pageants – but I thought those clothes were extraordinary. I thought those kids looked like Fabergé eggs!' Quietly extravagant, both ordinary and extraordinary, romantic and real, demure and deranged, Christopher Kane's clothing itself has travelled a long way, from Motherwell to the Met in New York, with Kering, the world's second-largest luxury goods conglomerate, investing along the way in 2013. And yet the sentiment behind it remains the same.

The Kanes learned the power of clothing at an early age, and it's the poetry of their upbringing that defines

their output today. They never use fashion to hide from who they are or where they are from. And that is the beauty of what they do. They look back at the chic way their mother dressed for a night out at Glasgow's Barrowland when it was a dancehall in the 1960s – 'clean' is how Christopher Kane defines it – or how Tammy used to dress as a teenager in the 1990s. She started shopping at Glasgow's designer stores aged 12; the siblings would save their pocket money to buy her things. There's also the shadowy figure of Jan Devine, a woman they are fascinated with from their hometown. 'It's always Jan Devine,' says Tammy Kane. 'God love her,' adds Christopher.

'Versace stood out for us when we were growing up,' says Tammy. 'It really got us hooked. Now I'm pals with Donatella – it's weird.' In the 1990s, Glasgow was one of the Versace capitals of the world, with one of the biggest stand-alone stores. And it is this dream world of Versace that created a seismic shift for the pair and still holds sway. In 2009, Christopher Kane fulfilled many of the siblings' childhood ambitions when he became the designer of the re-launched Versus Versace line for seven show seasons. Yet there remains as much Motherwell as Milan in what the duo do, and this is the key to the unique dream world the pair have created through their own clothing line.

Another of the things that is as much Scotland as Italy for the Kanes is the importance of *la famiglia*. In many ways, Christopher Kane is the closest equivalent that Britain has to an Italian fashion house and how it operates. The house is built for the long term, with the future in mind. Yet its roots are essentially in the past, with all of the close family relationships that entails. In many ways, the beginning of the house was made possible through sacrifices made by Christopher Kane's family to support his education. For one, Tammy Kane saw Christopher through college both financially and emotionally, working as a receptionist at a car showroom in London, among other jobs. 'I was just waiting for Christopher to finish his MA so we could really begin,' she says – she already had her own degree in fashion and textiles from Heriot-Watt University. 'We had our dream of our own house by that point,' she says. 'We knew that was our future.' The company was founded directly after Christopher's graduation in 2006 and there has been no looking back since. 'We did college together,' says Christopher Kane. 'She has my BA and my MA from Saint Martins, they're hers as well. Tammy is my best friend. It's total trust when you have your blood there. I can tell Tammy my deepest, darkest secrets. She's always been there for me and always will.'

Jo-Ann Furniss: We met very early on, around 2000, at a party with Russell Sage.[1] We all got really, really drunk together. You were doing your work placement at his studio, Christopher, and Tammy was there, too…

Christopher Kane: We were always messing about when we were at Russell's. We'd be covered in Swarovski – we got caught on the bus with another intern, covered in it one day. We all looked like Michael Jackson! We thought we were in trouble, but Russell thought it was the funniest thing ever. That was during my BA and Russell was doing these great collections and brilliant shows in London with Katie Grand styling them. He was the best make-do and mend person ever, finding antique fabrics, scraps of this and that, bits of old cardboard and making them into something. Then I worked at Giles Deacon's studio and that's when I properly met Katie…

Tammy Kane: That's when you properly met fashion!

Christopher: That's when I had fashion slammed in my face, all the power, power, power. With Katie Grand there and Russell Marsh[2] walking in, and Bob the Jack Russell doing a poo in the middle of the studio – and me having to clean it up. And I was still hooked on fashion! I remembered thinking, these are mad people, but these people are icons and could have films made about them.

Tammy: Louise Wilson[3] eventually put us in touch with Russell Marsh to do our casting. We clicked straight away – he pretends to be all mysterious, but he's like a comedian.

Christopher: Russell did our casting for the first show, Spring-Summer 2007. We got a lot of attention from the beginning and the pressure was on. We thought what the hell have we done? We were wondering what we'd do next, where would the next idea come from? But it does just come. You do tap into something as a designer; there is this almost supernatural element to it. And I truly believe the supernatural does exist.

There is always an element of the supernatural and spiritual in what you do, aesthetically as well. No matter how pretty something might appear, there is always something quite disturbing underneath…

Christopher: Auntie Mary and Auntie Sandra had a big part to play in that when we were growing up. They are my mother's sisters. Auntie Sandra let us watch horror films, things with devil worship in them, the lot. We'd go to the video van and watch everything – *Children of the Corn*[4] terrified us. There were these fictional fears and then these non-fictional fears when we were growing up, things that involved characters from the neighbourhood. And Auntie Mary didn't believe in seahorses and hummingbirds – she really didn't!

Tammy: But she was chic and sensitive, always either reading or knitting. So when she told us a little girl with bright, orange hair had appeared in her flat, a girl that she found out had passed away in that place, we knew she would not make it up.

Christopher: Then there was also my mum's mum, Granny Irvine. She read tea leaves.

Tammy: Granny Irvine was a Jehovah's Witness. There was no excess there; it was make do with what you have – she had 11 children.[5] And there was Granny Kane, my dad's mum who was a strict Roman Catholic. She was devout and went to chapel every day. She would make us say Hail Mary's behind an armchair. She introduced guilt to us. But we skived off church; just didn't go.

Christopher: There was *The Clothes Show*,[6] *Antiques Roadshow*, *London's Burning* and *Spitting Image* on TV on a Sunday! I just could not bear the idea of sitting in church and being so bored.

Tammy: Although the Communion is the best part, I was always scared of being picked for the procession. Dad pretended to be a devout Catholic to his mum – and I exposed him for being a liar for 40 years!

Christopher: Mum was born a Protestant and she was forced to send us to Catholic school.

Tammy: But she hated the Orange Lodge[7] and all of that. It was a big thing for a Protestant to be with a Catholic in Scotland. My mother could not stand any of it.

Christopher: I loved the theatre of it all. And I liked religious films: *Ben-Hur*, *The Song of Bernadette*, *Agnes of God*. It was the sense of believing in the supernatural that I liked in those films.

Tammy: Our cousin is the priest in Newarthill [the village just north of Motherwell where the Kanes are from]. He was kidnapped by pirates in Africa! He's had a terrible time.

Christopher: A lot of these things have appeared in our collections. In Newarthill, we lived on Carfin Road and at the end of the road is Carfin Grotto[8].

Tammy: We never thought we were devout enough to really spend time there when we were growing up – it is a major Roman Catholic shrine. It was sort of forbidden to go there. The good Catholic kids went; they were devout and we weren't. It felt massive when we were kids and there was a lot of controversy surrounding the place – sectarianism and people going in and destroying it. Pilgrims would come from all over Scotland and our street would be lined with them. You could hear the singing. It was amazing, so gorgeous. Returning there now, it has a new surge of life, the beauty of the place; I can't wait to take Bonnie there at Christmas.

Christopher: A big part of the latest collection started with watching a programme about a lost tribe coming into contact with the modern world. They were stealing clothes and saying, 'Now we have clothes, we are ashamed to be naked'. We wanted that nakedness in the collection, something sexual as well as religious, something almost pagan and pre-Christian, as well as Roman Catholic.

In a way, I think you see yourselves like that tribe…

Christopher: I really treasure clothes, I really do. There is something so special about them and what they meant to us when we were growing up – things like Versace. Clothes certainly changed our lives.

Tammy: It was almost like these clothes are not meant to be for you – but we were going to make them ours anyway. I still feel like I don't really belong in fashion – and that's a good thing. We can dip in and out of it all because of that feeling.

Christopher: Fashion people can be some of the worst people, but also some of the best people ever!

Tammy: When my mum died last year, the support that we got was unbelievable. It was so, so nice.

Fashion is like a family. Some parts of it you love and some parts you can't stand, but it is still part of the same family. And you will always defend

'Auntie Sandra had a big part to play in what we do. She let us watch all sorts of horror films, things with devil worship in them, the lot.'

'Clothes like Versace changed our lives when we were growing up in Scotland. Really got us hooked. Now I'm pals with Donatella – it's weird.'

your family to people on the outside.

Tammy: Ultimately, we all share a common love and that's the clothes. It's like a religion.

Christopher: And you have to be a fanatic. I have never been interested in celebrity, but I always worshipped designers. People like Gianni and Donatella Versace – you've seen my fashion TV tape. And it was Helmut Lang. It was the 1990s and people just weren't guarded. On that tape they're swearing and saying all sorts of things about sex, about the character they were creating getting fucked. Now everything is so PC!

Tammy: We were always looking at characters with that element of sex. There is always Jan Devine in what we do – she is vaguely related to us. She would walk about in little skirts up to here. Auntie Sandra would call her a nightwalker – she would just prowl. That would scare us. She would wear the oddest, most bizarre things – I don't know where she got these clothes from. Little skirts, big jackets and coats and she had a certain look – models walk in and we say she looks like Jan and we cast them. Like Jodie Foster in *The Accused*…[9]

Christopher: Or even when she's in *Bugsy Malone*![10]

Tammy: We saw films way too early when we were way too young. I always remember thinking there was something weird about all those children in *Bugsy Malone*…

Christopher: I thought how could they get away with that! I would dress up like I was in *Bugsy Malone* when I was a kid.

Tammy: So it was *The Accused* mixed with *Bugsy Malone*. And I always remember my brothers watching a cartoon porno of Snow White – Snow White getting fucked. That really disturbed me because we always loved Disney. Those wee villain faces – Disney destroyed!

Christopher: And I always remember my brothers watching *The Young Ones*. We loved *The Young Ones*. The guy with the long hair, Neil, he's often our girl…[11]

Tammy: He's the same as Priscilla to us, the Joseph Szabo girl.[12] So that answers where a lot of our aesthetic comes from, and our characters.

Christopher: We've seen or met all of these characters in our lives before. We've known them, been friends with them or were scared of them. Now they personify what we do.

1. Fashion designer turned interior designer.

2. Prada casting director.

3. Louise Wilson, legendary and much-missed director of Central Saint Martins MA Fashion course who died aged 52 in 2014.

4. A 1984 film based on a Stephen King short story about a town taken over by murderous children. It starred Linda Hamilton, who later the same year starred in *The Terminator*.

5. The official Jehovah's Witness website – www.jw.org – says that, 'Nowhere does the Bible explicitly condemn birth control … If a husband and wife choose to use a nonabortive form of contraception to avoid pregnancy, that is their personal decision and responsibility'.

6. *The Clothes Show* was perhaps British television's first TV show dedicated to fashion. It was first broadcast on October 13, 1986, when it was presented by Selina Scott and designer Jeff Banks. The BBC's website says, 'The idea was to mix reports from the catwalk with items on how to delude yourself you could achieve model looks and still have change from a 20-pound note'.

7. The Orange Order – split like Freemasons into lodges – is a Protestant fraternal order originally founded in the 1790s in what is now Northern Ireland. It is represented in Scotland by the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland. Dedicated to protecting Protestant interests against Catholics', its name is a reference to William of Orange, the Dutch-born Protestant prince, who defeated the forces of deposed Catholic monarch James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. He went on to crowned William III. Orange Orders still hold annual marches on July 12 to celebrate that victory.

8. The National Shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes or Carfin Grotto was opened in late 1920 by a group of parishioners after a visit to Lourdes, a Catholic pilgrimage site in France. The shrine was consecrated in September 1922.

9. In *The Accused* (1998), Jodie Foster played a woman fighting for justice after being gang-raped by three men in a bar. The role saw her win her first Oscar as Best Actress.

10. Alan Parker's *Bugsy Malone* is a gangster musical with an all-child cast in which a 13-year-old Foster played a speakeasy singer called Tallulah.

11. *The Young Ones* was a cult sitcom about four students living in a shared house. Often described as 'anarchic', the show ran for two seasons in 1982 and 1984 on the BBC. The character of Neil was a peace-loving, permanently depressed hippy played by Nigel Planer.

12. Joseph Szabo's photo of Priscilla gained widespread fame when Dinosaur Jr. put it on the cover of their 1991 album, *Green Mind*.

Art Direction: Christopher Kane, Tammy Kane and Jo-Ann Furniss. Models: Jamie Bochert and Karolina Laczkowska. Hair: Anthony Turner. Make-up: Thomas de Kluyver. Assistants: Lex Kembery, Matthew Healy and Simon Mackinlay. Printing and processing: Bayeux, London. Retouching: Picture House, New York.

Christopher and Tammy Kane, September 2016, Dalston, London

‘We are living through the next industrial revolution.’

Burberry’s next-generation move, examined by fashion’s next generation.

By Hannah Rogers
Photographs by Juergen Teller

Shortly after its hugely polarizing see-now-buy-now announcement was made in February, Burberry gave us a call. Would *System* be interested in examining the company’s inner workings as it made its idea a reality and launched its first straight-to-store collection?

There was talk of ‘unprecedented access’: CEO and creative director Christopher Bailey could be interviewed on multiple occasions, and we could photograph him, the company’s offices, factories, models, staff, and, most importantly, the crucial show and store debut of the soberly titled ‘September’ collection. After some deliberation (should we commission a high-profile fashion journalist, a novelist or a tech impresario to write the story?), we had an idea. Perhaps the people best suited to chronicling an operational shift being sold as forward thinking were the people who might actually be affected by Burberry’s long-term plans. Fashion’s next generation.

So we contacted Central Saint Martins to find a promising student fashion writer. Then Juergen Teller suggested that he and 12 of his students from the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nuremberg share the photographic assignments.

Burberry gamely agreed to our idea. The following pages present Hannah Rogers’ conversations with Christopher Bailey, and a Teller-curated portfolio of his students’ work. Both are proof of what Christopher told Hannah: ‘It’s always worth trying something different, something new.’

If there is one thing my generation has been taught, it's that transparency is king. So I'll come right out with it: when it comes to Burberry, I am a #fangirl. In fact, when the mystery assignment for which *System* approached Central Saint Martins MA journalism students transpired to be a Burberry story – and that the magazine's editor had chosen me to write it – I felt like I'd been preparing since I was old enough to covet a trench coat.

Burberry was the first brand I cared about that wasn't available to buy on a suburban high street. It was the first 'luxury designer' store my mother took me into on ask-for-forgiveness-not-permission days off from school. We'd drink the freebie Champagne we were offered, feigning the intention of buying, while I played dress up and fell in love with half the store, not knowing that my mother was making a mental list, ready to secretly purchase one item to wrap and give to me at Christmas or on my birthday. It's the first brand I watched go through an operational revolution, moving from an over-licensed and underachieving brand to a leader in digital innovation and Brit cool. It captivated me to the point of obsession.

Burberry got me into fashion. So, yes, I'm sentimental. Which means I was less likely than most, in February, to point the finger and charge the company's announcement of a new runway-to-retail schedule with murder (of luxury, small brands and the relevance of buyers and editors, in one villainous swoop). On top of that, as part of Gen-X-Y-Who-Knows, I think I was supposed to 'get' it. I didn't, though, not fully.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Firstly, there's a question that needs asking. Perhaps by everyone. What *is* luxury? Is it time? Privacy? Convenience? A price tag? An exhausted term used to make us believe something is unique, special, worth buying? According to François-Henri Pinault, CEO of the Kering group, and a fair number of other top industry figures, luxury fashion is a 'dream' made real by the time spent waiting for it. Not for me it isn't. I am an aspirational shopper. I love the buzz of the catwalk show. I love watching them on live-streams, Snapchat stories, Instagram and, on the occasion a CSM student card or mate on the door can blag you a standing spot at the back, in person. But by the time the clothes are usually available to buy, I don't care anymore. I can't afford them anyway, and the high-street knock-off is already in my wardrobe. Because of this, the collections don't necessarily exist in real terms. Which isn't to say I don't want them – I *really* do – but my passion for them comes from big, artistic, blow-your-socks-off statements. It's about what is Instagrammable, rather than what is wearable. This is the environment in which my interests in fashion and journalism have developed; the tide of change inevitable and stronger than industry institutions.

Such statements are difficult to achieve in our now-now-now climate. Designers don't have the time to, 'cook', as it were. And with all the musical chairs taking place between the luxury houses, it's hardly surprising that aesthetic overhaul is rife; Gucci, Balenciaga and Saint Laurent are the proof that stylistic revolution works. Which is what concerned me most about the timing of Burberry's announcement.

I initially thought Christopher Bailey needed to give himself more creative space and that was why he had decided to cut his collections down to two a year; why Burberry's ready-to-wear and diffusion lines were going to be streamlined into one brand; and why seasonal collection titles had been shed and replaced simply by 'February' and 'September'. Burberry designs have been considered 'safe' in recent years; you know what to expect. Surely, this was to be a moment to prove critics wrong, to stick it to the nay-sayers. But no indications of that were given. The press statements failed to excite, and suddenly – perhaps inevitably – a *lot* of voices were suggesting that only a company like Burberry could implement a see-now-buy-now strategy, because only Burberry's (safe) collections and (sizeable) resources would suit it. I began to wonder whether my history with Burberry had been overshadowing what is hammered into us about objectivity at CSM: you have to look at what is in front of you. Perhaps I had been naive about the business opportunity the strategy presented for the company.

What I've found most interesting about the debate around see-now-buy-now – and I accept that I might get slapped down for even suggesting this – is how it has principally been held by a generation whose careers might well be over before the full impact of brand's new strategy has been felt. Much like Brexit, it feels as though the future is being decided by a group of people who

'For an industry that talks a lot about moving forward and reflecting the changes in culture and behaviour, I think we can be stuck in our ways.'

won't be around to witness it. Equally intriguing amid all the howls of outrage was Burberry's decision not to fight its corner. Why the silence?

The answer came in June when I was invited to a press and buyers preview of the first see-now-buy-now collection, an affair of secret passageways, non-disclosure agreements and Bond-level secrecy. It turned out that the house's non-response had a decidedly simple answer: everyone had just been too busy transforming Christopher Bailey's announcement into a reality to get involved in a shouting match. While there was a sense of trepidation mixed with optimism at the preview, the overall message was also simple: come on, give it a go.

My first meeting with Bailey comes a month after this, in late July. As with the collection preview, it takes place at Horseferry House, an impressively immense building situated between Pimlico, Westminster and Lambeth. Burberry HQ has a buzz to it. There's a lot going on. And at the centre of it is the unassuming Mr. Bailey, awkwardly jumping the 8.59am queue for the lifts, in the company he more or less runs. He's in good spirits (though that could just be the media training), despite the enormous amount of self-imposed pressure he's put himself under in the past few months. The dust has settled since the announcement was made, but only a week ago reports of Bailey relinquishing his dual CEO/creative director role at the company to focus on the latter have surfaced. Now, more than ever, is a time to ask questions about what is happening at Burberry, where the company is going and who is leading the charge. Which side of Bailey's brain is ruling? Left or right? Work or play? Finance or fizz? For the girl who skipped school to try on trench coats, but is now being schooled in some healthy Central Saint Martins scepticism, it is the perfect opportunity.

Part One
Thursday July 21, 2016
Burberry HQ, London

Hannah Rogers: You made your big announcement in February and obviously a lot has been going on since then. But firstly, I'm interested in knowing how you define Burberry today?
Christopher Bailey: That is a big first question! I have always talked about Burberry as this amazingly, richly inspired cultural company. That has always been the foundation of everything that we do. Thomas Burberry was our founder, and he was intensely focused on moving forward, and exploring – expeditions, aviation, exploring the world. What I have always tried to do is retain that curiosity and ask, 'What does being global today actually mean?' I have always believed in research and development, and in having the freedom to play. That is the root of what design is about. It's not about formulas. Formulas come out of playing, and that is why we've created this diverse group of people with many, many skills and interests.

What would you say are the key elements of luxury at Burberry today?
I think that whatever we do has a strong point of view, a creative process, and is beautifully crafted – as it should be to have a Burberry name behind it. We are trying to look at the way we work rather than telling customers they have to be forced into our timings. I'm not pretending it's a doddle and I'm not saying we've got all the answers, by the way. It's just in the DNA here to always try something new. But that doesn't mean what we try is right for everybody. We've never said it's right for anybody else.

I think it would be good to outline what see-now-buy-now means at Burberry. Is that even an accurate term to use?
I guess if you want to look at it in very black-and-white terms, you do see the collection now and you can buy it now, if you want. It wasn't really the way that we thought about it. It was more about thinking what the role of the fashion show is today. Designers want to get as many people to see their show as possible, but then they retreat back into the traditional fashion cycle. What always felt slightly odd to me is that you create these extraordinary events – which I think we've become a bit blasé and cynical about – and then try to recreate hype six months later, when the collection finally hits the shops. But the show has actually become a customer-facing moment through all these virtual platforms. So why not follow through on making the collection available to the customer? It's quite rational, really, rather than a new industry philosophy.

If the show is customer facing, where does that leave the press, the buyers – the industry? Many of your attendees will have already seen the collection when it goes to show...
We knew we had to find a way to ensure that the industry was able to work within our new schedule. We decided we needed to go back a little bit and create a more intimate, private moment that is embargoed until the main launch, the way that shows used to be.

I like the idea that you're basically rolling out an experiment you're not entirely sure is going to work.
I am definitely not sure it's going to work; I'm not even sure how you'd define 'working' today. You know, for an industry that talks a lot about moving forward, I think we can be stuck in our ways. I think that we were the first brand to do a live-streamed fashion show, and I knew that when we did it, it was a big shift. It meant the dynamics of what that show was were changing, so I made it that you could buy certain pieces immediately from the runway. It wasn't a headline or about trying to do something that created noise. But it was actually quite a profound thing to say, 'We're inviting a very different audience in'. Having done that, it didn't make sense to me to show a collection to this new audience, and then expect them to behave exactly like the industry. It felt slightly patronising. That was in 2009, and it started this way of thinking for us. We have just been trying to find ways of bringing people into our world – a peep behind the curtains. And what we are doing this season is just the next step of that. It certainly felt less radical inside the company than the way it was reported externally.

Put like that, it sounds more like a quietly considered evolution rather than a knee-jerk reaction to what you think the consumer wants.
Well, it is! This is evolution, not a headline. I mean, *everything* is so much more immediate today. I can press a button and speak to someone instantly on the other side of the world. I can have food from my favourite restaurant delivered in a matter of minutes, or I can stay in someone's beautiful apartment in Iceland. And I feel like fashion has always reflected changing cultures and changes in behaviour.

How has see-now-buy-now affected the structure and the internal workings of Burberry?
Not dramatically. We have to look at our calendar, obviously, and we have to work sooner, but we're not quite so Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter. I think it is very difficult in terms of a global company to say, 'This is my Spring/Summer collection' – it's so old fashioned.

How is it referred to internally?
By the month that it gets delivered into the store. But then that month here in London might be hot, while the same month in another part of the world might be the opposite. So that is why I talk about these things as being a bit season-less. It's difficult today to say I'm doing a winter collection, because the collections are so diverse, and represent different parts of the world. Of course, you have to have a point of view to that collection, but it's not necessarily about just bikinis or just shearling coats.

It is fashion reacting to the world more than the world being forced to react to fashion. It's fashion with perhaps a little more humility…
That is exactly what it is. I think humility is so important; being open and being receptive and being curious. It's not sticking with the codes of what the industry says it should be. We all saw what happened to the music business when it tried to hold back the way we all wanted to live. Whether you were a traditional luxury customer or not, you know, those behaviours hit everybody, not just one sector in society.

Do the calendar changes impact your actual design process?
No, because we are always working in advance. You know, it's not like we've done a collection that we've designed on Monday and it's in the shops on Tuesday. That would be physically impossible.

Why do you think your announcement became this big drama in the press? Did you anticipate any of that?
I expected there to be debate, but I definitely underestimated the *scale* of that debate; people coming out with things like, 'This is outrageous!', and so on. I definitely didn't anticipate that.

It feels like the entire belief system of the industry has been up for debate…
I felt sometimes like it was getting a bit silly, and I came across as old-fashioned and insular. I read comments like, 'How can you be creative if you are doing something like that?' Well, that's not how I define creativity at all.

'It wasn't a headline or about trying to create noise. It was actually quite a profound thing to say, 'We're inviting a very different audience in.''

'I don't believe that people see a show, then tear out an image from a magazine, stick it on the fridge and say, When that comes out, I must go and buy it.'

Why do you think it is that parts of the industry seem to be resisting the digital revolution?
I don't know. When I joined Burberry, digital was already part of the way that we all lived. It just felt very natural and instinctive. Which is why, for us, the subject of the Internet being bad for a luxury company has always felt alien.

Is Burberry almost at odds now with the industry?
No, I don't think so. I think lots of people are doing brilliant exciting things; it's just that we're doing *this*. Some people will do versions of this, others won't.

Do you think your new structure is comparable to the process of high-street fashion?
I haven't thought of it in those terms. I definitely think it's about making sure that we are relevant for the way people live, rather than trying to box people into an industry thing – whether that's the high street or any other sector.

Did you have any hard facts about consumer behaviour that influenced your decisions?
We obviously have a lot of data. As with everything, I always really marry instinct with information. Information tells you about yesterday and instinct tells you about moving forward.

Speaking of the customer, what does this shift in your schedule offer them?
I think it gives a direct window onto the collection that might have historically come in much later and forced them to re-dig. I don't believe anymore that when people see a fashion show, they print out their little Instagram picture or tear it from an industry magazine and stick it on the fridge and say, 'When that comes out, I must go and buy it'.

I read once that Marc Jacobs says he gets a real buzz from changing and reworking his collections moments before the show starts. You put this collection to bed *three months* before your show – I saw it in June. So what would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of wrapping a collection so early?
Well, we still have a deadline, because we were inviting some press in, and you're a pretty scary lot! I was working right up until that last second before, until the first person walked in, literally. Nothing really changes for our customer, because I could then argue that pre-show tweaks at another company happen six months before the collection goes to store, and in exactly the same way that it's happening for us before the press preview.

But for you as a designer, are you not missing that instant feedback; the reveal and reaction of the show?
I've had lots of reactions and feedback from those press and buyers who have seen it. We've moved the calendar back, but there will also be the reaction from the wider audience that sees the show, and then comes to our stores. There will still be that excitement.

I was a big fan of Burberry Brit – that was the diffusion line that myself and my peers were able to buy into – and obviously you've chopped Brit and London…
[Laughs] Chopped!

Well, streamlined. But how are you going to assimilate those aspirational customers into the new price points of February and September?
We're not changing the price points. We're saying that instead of the collections having a Brit or London or Prorsum label on them, they'll have a Burberry label, because we found that our customers didn't really understand the difference.

Younger people are so used to convenience at the touch of a button, is that something that you would agree with?
Yes, although I don't know if this strategy is aimed principally at the young, but it is, I hope, a relevant approach to today. You grew up in a very different way to me. I class myself as in the middle. I still like my newspaper delivered in the morning because I like the ceremony of reading my paper. But I also have all my news channels on all my digital devices.

Do you remember when you got your first mobile phone?
Yes, and I remember at my first job I had this ridiculous device that did e-mail, but took about an hour to get an e-mail out. I have always loved gadgets. My grandad was an electrician and it was the big thing in our family. Every week he would bring home the latest gadget. I was very close to him, and many, many defunct gadgets were stuffed under his bed; as is the case today, in our house.

'We all saw what happened to the music business when it tried to hold back the way we wanted to live. That hit everybody, not just one sector in society.'

Every innovation that Burberry has tested – from live streaming to the way that iPads and technology are used in stores – is about customer service, and that see-now-buy-now again feels like you are principaly serving the customer. Is that something that defines you?
I am very respectful of the customer because, in the end, we are serving people. People enjoy the things that we make. I can see, right now, people talking about our collection on our Instagram feed; the first thing I do in the morning is scroll down the comments. The other day we launched a boot so I am really interested to see what people think: some love it, some hate it, some think it's too garish.

So the market research is is actually happening right in front of your eyes.
Yes, it's live. I find that really exciting, and that is why I just question the shows. Because while I am very respectful of our industry, we're just redefining what the show is, rather than saying or pretending it's for the industry and buyers. Don't pretend it's for the industry and then try and get as many social followers as possible – that's bonkers!

Although Kanye's not known for his humility, when I heard about his Madison Square Garden show in front of 20,000 people – of which one person was Anna Wintour, and another was, say, Suzy Menkes, and then there's basically 19,998 members of the public – it did feel like a very symbolic statement. The industry exists, and it might have a fancy front-row seat, but it *only* exists within a broader audience.
I could not agree more! But it just kind of shows how much the world is changing, in so many different ways. Something funny happened to me a couple of weeks ago: I was at home and we'd just put our two girls to bed. My partner and I were exhausted, so I rang the Thai restaurant for a delivery. As I went outside, tracking the delivery fella on my phone, I saw a drone flying above our house, probably photographing something. And I was just like, 'Shit, man, the world has literally changed beyond belief! I can order my food, track its delivery and by the way, there's a drone in the sky!'

Do you think there will come a point in time when Burberry is as forward thinking in terms of its actual design as much as its creative thinking?
I think we evolve slower in the way that we want to personally express ourselves through clothes. I think it is through the more subliminal or more nuanced things, or the way your clothes might be made – the way that the fibres are created, the sustainability of those fibres, or how deep down the supply chain can I track a particular fibre, yarn or fabric. I definitely think that the technology is in the weaving techniques, the dyeing techniques; it's in the way that we now use 3D printing to create hardware.

Is there a big difference between the Burberry trench I'd buy today and the one I'd have bought 15 years ago?
It's always been gabardine, but the techniques we now use to weave that gabardine are definitely different. So yes, it has changed, but you might not necessarily know it or feel it. And you shouldn't – you don't need to know.

To what extent is a member of your Regent Street shop staff aware of the impending changes and the shift in the calendar? Do they even *need* to be up to scratch with things? At what point are they going to be acclimatizing to the fact that, on September 19, there might be someone banging on the shop door saying, 'I want to buy the collection I've just watched go down a runway on my phone'?
I do something called LiveChat – and I do them regularly – where I talk to the whole company, about 11,000 people. It's just a webcam essentially and anybody in the company, wherever you work, in a store in Rome or Beijing or in one of our offices around the world, can ask me live questions. So anything we do, I try to kind of say, 'Hey guys, we're doing this. I haven't got all the details yet, but I'll make sure you guys get them'. So they might not know every detail, but of course they know. And I think that is what attracts a certain person to the company; they are quite excited about those things.

Do you get asked tricky questions?
Yes, sometimes. Really tricky, candid questions, and, you know, you can't please everyone. I get tons of e-mails from customers too, some of which are people really complaining and others really happy.

That feels very much like a reflection of how polarized digital society is today. You post something on Instagram and

'I expected there to be debate, but I definitely underestimated the scale of that debate; people coming out with things like, 'This is outrageous!''

seconds later the comments are either 'Perfection!' or 'I fucking despise it!'
Yes, exactly. One of the first things I learned when I joined Burberry, was that everybody had a different opinion of what Burberry should be. I remember it so profoundly. I was berated by different people from the industry telling me that Burberry should be this or that. It was literally black over here and white over there. But then I thought, 'Just do what you think is right and follow your instinct'. So you can't listen to *every* customer voice; you have to go with your instinct.

As your announcement has proven, you can't please everyone either.
Never, and you shouldn't try, because as soon as you do you end up becoming bland, because you have no point of view anymore. I often say that our Marmite collections are the best ones.

Part Two
Wednesday September 7, 2016
Makers House, London

So it turns out that runway-to-retail fits perfectly into Burberry's DNA. The show is now consumer facing, translating hype into sales, and it makes sense. This is evolution, not revolution. And in reality, Bailey is less focused on the Facebook crowd than he makes out. Runway-to-retail is not really about attracting the digital generation, being down with the kids or attempting to be some kind of pricey fast-fashion brand. He knows that would never work. Mainly, because we can't afford it. We aren't his target customers. Yet. It would be false. Was I arrogant or delusional to assume this was the case? Every other brand out there seems to be trying to get into our pants (or empty pockets) with their marketing. By and large, it doesn't land. It's not even on our radar. I'm actually relieved.

So the real question that remains is whether this evolution might have dwindled Christopher Bailey's capacity for creativity as a designer. Absolutely not, he says. Yet, a partnership with the New Craftsmen – a website selling crafted products made in the UK – has just been announced. This feels like a bit of an obvious, or at least laboured, move, as though a focus on slow processes can distract naysayers from the new retail calendar. It's all over my Facebook feed though, with friends already making plans to visit Burberry's 'all-customers-welcome' show venue, the Arts-and-Craft-y sounding, Makers House.

Which is where I next meet Christopher Bailey. Wearing a hard hat and a high-vis, he is overseeing the building site that will become the new venue. What was once the original Foyles bookshop, and, funnily enough, a popular haunt of Charing Cross Road-based CSM students, is being Burberry-fied. Walls are being knocked through, staircases assembled, faux-Georgian interior doorways applied, cables hanging, paint samples splattered. It's hard to believe that in just a few days this space will be hosting 700 of the most influential members of the industry. And being beamed out to the digital world.

We have to shout over drills and dodge construction workers to get the interview done. The only quiet spot is in Mrs. Foyle's original office, wood panelled, a bit pokey, rather glorious, and now the HQ for Burberry's project-management team. That's the thing about evolution. It happens whether we want it to or not. Back in 1929, Foyles was a bastion of British retail, the largest bookshop in the world. Now it's (temporarily) the home of digitally minded luxury fashion. In just a few months it'll be knocked into luxury flats. No institution escapes change.

How do you envisage the next few days, in the run-up to the show?
Working with the craftspeople, the music, the physical space, working through how the collections will be presented in our stores all around the world, and what will happen in our windows as soon as the collection goes in.

Do you feel less in control, like you are not able to make any final tweaks to the collection?
I would argue the opposite; we've been able to put a lot more thought into preparations. But also in tandem, we are designing and sketching and draping and playing with the next collection, which is in February.

At this stage in the chronology of events – revealing one collection and preparing the next – what are the unexpected challenges you've come across?
There haven't been any kind of wild surprises. I mean, yesterday I had a thing when I was suddenly like, 'Did we order all the sizes for the shoes?' Because normally there are those couple of weeks before the show when we're like, OK, we need 10 39s, 12 37s. And I was like,

'As I went outside, tracking the delivery fella on my phone, I saw a drone flying above. And I was just like, 'Shit, man, the world's changed beyond belief!''

Photographer's assistants: Karin Xiao. Post-production: Catalin Plesa at Quickfix Retouch.

'Oh God, did we do that?' But no, to be honest, it's felt really less dramatic and much more natural, this process.

What are you most excited about?
I'm excited by the whole experience of this building. There will be mistakes and things that go wrong and things that surprise us, or, perhaps, go better than we imagined. I'm also looking forward to seeing how people react to the actual collection. You never really get that moment of excitement when a collection goes into the shops, because it's impossible – you can't throw a party for every arrival. People might be like, 'Yeah, who cares?' Or they might be excited to be part of something.

Internally at Burberry, is everyone now aware of what is happening next week?
Oh yes! In fact, in two hours I am doing another LiveChat to the whole company. There is always that balance between wanting to share everything and wanting to surprise. They don't need to know about every aspect. But what is wonderful is just travelling around the world and seeing that the people in our stores are like, 'The collection is going to be amazing'. There will be a lot in the stockrooms, and it cannot go out before the show, so as soon as the show has happened, it will be on shop floors all over the world. It's going to be crazy, especially working across all the time differences, but that's what's fun about it. Everyone's like, 'Who cares what time it is, even if it's 3a.m.!'

Does this feel like the new 'normal'?
I quite like that we haven't got 'normal' yet. I feel that we are living through a period of redefining all of our identities and who we are and how we work. The changes that are happening in every industry – as well as culturally, politically and socially – mean that it shouldn't actually be business as usual. Technology is changing everything, the way we interact with each other, the relationships we are building. I see my nieces and nephews and they have a completely different attitude towards sex and relationships and meeting people. It's all very different to the way that was natural for me, but there's nothing worse than standing still and becoming stagnant.

Tell me about the New Craftsmen.
We worked for the show on a lot of crafts and historical references and ways of working. The New Craftsmen is a wonderful organization in the UK that basically brings together all different crafts from around the country, from weaving and dyeing and embroidery and pottery to sculpture.

And these craftsmen are they actually working on the collection itself?
It's been completely separate; but that was kind of intentional. We created the mood board and the inspiration and they have taken that to create their own individual worlds. Then alongside all of that, we have a ton of stuff we are doing, using technology – whether it is with social media channels like Snapchat or Facebook – that creates a completely different translation of this speed.

How are you able to assimilate the two?
I find it all blends quite naturally. Burberry is a 160-year-old company, with a young team and young energy. You could say we're a company of contradictions. But I like that.

Part Three
Tuesday September 22, 2016
Makers House, London

Eighteen minutes. That's what seven months of build-up, debate and colossal operational shifts accumulated to last night at Makers House. Eighteen minutes, 82 looks, 250 pieces: Burberry's 'September' collection, inspired by Virginia Woolfe's *Orlando* and representing the blurring of eras and gender binaries, of what should be taken seriously and what not. Quite relevant, then.

But these were 18 minutes, 82 looks and 250 pieces that many in the room had already seen. Last night, it seems, was less about the clothes, of skirts over trousers, of lace and silk, of boys in effeminate pie-crust collars and girls in chunky tasselled bovver boots. For the press and buyers in attendance, that was the story three months ago, when they were invited to preview the collection. Last night was about revealing the clothes to the world, last night was about fanfare. An orchestra! Hordes of fans behind barricades! Cara Delevingne!

The fanfare was global, too. According to Burberry, 4.4 million people tuned in to the live stream, and it was all systems go operationally: the collection was immediately available online and in stores across 100 countries, despite the fact it had yet to be 'officially' judged by the key voices of the industry. Risky.

Or not. Because the judgment was

'My nieces and my nephews have totally different attitudes towards sex and relationships and meeting people. It's so different to what was natural for me.'

positive. Nearly every report was glowing. And sales were even better; queues outside the Regent Street store preceded any journalists uttering a single good word. Which makes me wonder – what did those reviews count for? By the time they went to press, transactions had already been made. A lot of them, in fact; Burberry insiders reported the collection to be selling 'like hot cakes'. I doubt anyone will be returning their new hero cavalry jacket (cropped, burgundy, doeskin wool, £3,495), just because a fashion editor didn't like it.

I'm training to be a critic. My whole job spec, supposedly, is to be an arbiter of taste, to advise, so people trust – or at least care about – my opinion. I should have clout. I should, by proxy, sell clothes. But Burberry seems to have cut out the middleman. It's created all its own hype. The only judgement that mattered last night, and will continue to matter in the coming weeks and months as the sales figures roll in, is that of the customers. Do they want to buy it? Yes, it seems, they do.

So, I suppose there is one thing I'm wondering about when I sit down again with Christopher Bailey at Makers House, the day after the show: is he now feeling a little bit smug?

Would you say the simple fact that you've presented 'newness' as a concept has paid off?
As an industry – and I certainly don't exclude myself from this – we get bored very quickly. I always talk about it in terms of five-to-seven year periods where each five to seven years, you've got to reinvent yourself again. It's changing, getting closer and closer, with less and less time. It's a real balance, because people want to know what your identity is. I always feel like a brand is like a personality. Imagine if all of us became someone else every two years. There's a fine line with how much you push that.

At what point in your life were you first made aware that fashion design could – or *would* need to – incorporate both creative and business thinking?
I feel as if it's part of who I am. The way that I always describe a designer, similar to what my dad did as a carpenter, is one-half artist – somebody who connects with things on an emotional level, and who has a clear idea of an aesthetic or communicating an aesthetic – and one-half engineer. An engineer in technical terms – clothes need to fit and work on a body – but also an engineer in the sense of how you construct and organize a company. You have to have those sides if you're a designer. Not everyone is 50/50. I'm definitely more on the creative side, but the operational side, I love as well.

To what extent did your experiences working with Tom Ford at Gucci influence the work – and the sheer scale of ambition – you've put in at Burberry? And how did that Gucci era shape your personal philosophy towards merging fashion design and business?
I think we're all influenced by the experiences that we have. Both Donna Karan and Tom were great mentors for me, and are still important people in my life. I was healthily tormented working with both of them, because they're both incredibly clever, creative people. There's always a frustration working within that environment, particularly if you have an opinion. But it's healthy. I was a student in those relationships.

Do you think that made you more capable as both creative director and chief executive? And in light of the recent announcement about your change from CEO to president of Burberry, has that changed?
It hasn't changed yet. I know the press keep saying it's changed. Frankly, I wish it had changed! My role now is a mix of billions of different worlds, which I love by the way. Again, contrary to some press reports. I've always been a risk-taker, and I like to put my head above the parapet and try things. I'm not afraid of tomatoes being thrown at me, because that's how you learn, and I don't have much of an ego. On a personal level, I think it's OK to try stuff, and if you fail, you fail. I happen to be in a very public role in a very public company, so I guess anything that's seen as a test that does or doesn't work can be seen as a failure on a worldwide level. I don't see that as a failure. When I took that role, it felt right for me and the company. We're going through huge changes as an organization at the moment to make sure that we're fit for the future. I think right now, design and creativity is going to be the focus of the future, and I know that's what I love, so I want to be able to free myself up to focus on that.

Have you ever felt merging creativity and business to be counterproductive?

'I consider myself somebody who has brain cells, and is also creative. I don't want to be in this weird bubble of, 'Oh, we better not scare the designer.''

Never. And I still believe it's imperative. You cannot live in a bubble. If you embrace social media, for example, you suddenly have a dialogue. It's a conversation. Historically, as an industry, we've had our words, window displays, ad campaigns. It's not been a two-way conversation. Now it's a proper conversation. That means you can't separate business, and fashion and creativity.

You previously worked alongside CEOs Rose Marie Bravo and then Angela Ahrendts, so did you find it lonely at the top when you became CEO yourself, without that business voice to dialogue with?
No, not lonely. I loved working with the team that I hired. With Rose Marie, she had an experience, I had an experience; our partnership was unique. It was the same with Angela; we both had different experiences. With Marco [Gobbetti, Burberry's recently appointed CEO], it's going to be nothing like what I had before, because he has a different world of experiences. We'll dovetail together.

Marco doesn't come from a particularly digital background, having come from Céline, and previously Bottega Veneta. What are you hoping he'll bring to Burberry?
A partnership is where each person brings a point of view and a skill. I think the digital and technological side is something I'm incredibly passionate about. It's not something Marco has promoted as an idea. He clearly understands the world, but given his existing experience, it's not something he has ever pushed. Likewise, he has enormous experience that I don't have in retail and operations, and translating a creative vision into a very slick retail environment. Those are just two little examples, but I hope that we will create a partnership based on both of our strengths and passions.

Is the pressure off a bit, now that you're no longer CEO and creative director? Do you feel a slight sense of relief?
No, none whatsoever. Number one, Marco's not here yet. He starts next year. Number two, I've always felt fully accountable for this company. It's not my company, but I've always carried that weight of responsibility, and I certainly don't see that changing with Marco. I'm still out there, putting my views of what this company should be in terms of its creativity, and its fashion. It's a point of view. And it's only my point of view. What I mean by that is somebody new coming in as a designer would have a very different way of doing things. When you're a designer, putting a vision out there, it's a very bold thing, because you're telling the world 'I believe in this', and that won't go away.

Fashion is wrapped up in elitism. Yet Burberry's rapport with the consumer is becoming increasingly democratic. How do you know that approach won't reduce the emotional interest in the brand for some customers?
First of all, I'm very uncomfortable with the idea of elitism. I'm very uncomfortable with the idea of exclusivity. In the sense that 'exclusive' means you are excluding someone, and that's not what fashion is about, in my opinion. I'm not sure I believe in that; that's just my personal values. That does not mean that you can't create something incredibly beautiful. It goes beyond cost for me. It's why I embrace technology, because I believe in being able to share things. I'm not naive. You can be incredibly inspired by the making of something. It doesn't necessarily mean you have the means to buy and live with that product.

Why has fashion been associated with elitism for so long?
I don't know. Honestly. I don't like any feeling of not feeling good enough, or feeling unworthy of experiencing something. Let me tell you a story. I grew up in a very working-class family in Yorkshire. My mum saw a watch from a famous luxury brand, and she must've made a passing comment to my dad like, 'That is the most beautiful watch I've seen'. Dad decided he wanted to buy it for her – I mean, we just didn't buy things like that; it wasn't part of our world at all. But he saved up for months. I was a student down here at the time, just 18, and was sent by my dad to Bond Street with the money he'd saved – I'd cashed the cheque he sent me. It was like a different world, the most exciting thing I'd ever done. But when I went into the shop, it was the most intimidating, ruthless and uncomfortable situation I've ever been in. I was belittled, and made to feel so inadequate, even though I was about to spend the stash of money in my pocket. I had to lie to my dad about what happened and tell him the experience was magical, but the memory has stayed with me – shopping is not just about money. It's about the experience, and I hope that the Burberry experience – even when it's online – is one where we embrace and welcome people. Because I'm delighted at the idea of our customer being somebody for whom Burberry isn't the norm, and that this could be a major purchase and a major treat. In short, elitism in stores is something that I feel is very old-fashioned, just as a concept.

I have a question for you that I wrote prior to seeing the show last night. Is it a concern for you that the fast pace of digital could be curbing creativity? More specifically, could there be a danger of Burberry's operational strategy eclipsing its fashion-design prowess?
I think the idea that a change in operational functions might affect creativity is fundamentally patronising to a designer. The idea that you cannot be creative, because you're operating in a slightly different world, is so offensive as a concept. I consider myself somebody who has brain cells, and also is creative. I don't want to be in this weird little bubble of, 'Oh, we better not scare the designer'. Come on guys, that's what design is about, finding solutions. This question could only ever come up in fashion; it wouldn't happen in any other creative industry. So, the answer to the question, I don't believe so. Quite strongly.

Structurally, how is Burberry going to adapt to these changes? In terms of working environment, a lot of people hot-desk, freelance, etc. Certainly a lot of us coming out of Saint Martins end up freelancing, because it offers more money and a more fluid working life. But Burberry appears to be this considerable machine. How are you going to adapt to the coming years and changing attitudes towards work?
We hot desk like the best of them. We have freelancers like the best of them. We naturally work like that. That way of working is not alien to us. The scale of the company means we can be perceived as a very well-oiled, big, corporate machine, but we're more agile than that. We're constantly addressing this, by the way, and I'm very close to Facebook, and they're all facing the same issues: what does it mean to have a new type of team? Because these very different young lives, coming out of university now, have very different expectations and needs. Then, that new generation gets older, and their needs change again – suddenly they need to start buying a house, and things become more traditional, just by the nature of life. Everything is kind of in cycles.

When was your most recent live Q&A with the staff, and what was the trickiest question to answer this time?
I did one yesterday. Actually, thinking about the previous question you asked about working culture, I remember was a few years ago I was asked by a member of the team why I was getting rid of private offices for people, and opting for open-plan. The answer was: because I hate hierarchy. The argument that I was getting was very relevant, that maybe with a more traditional group of people, they would feel they had been working throughout their career to get an office. Then once they get an office, they want a bigger one because they're in the next stage of their careers. Then by the time they're 'super heroes', they want a corner office with a view. That's almost a part of the package. An expectation. Trying to answer that without offending or belittling people was challenging. Because it's like saying that everything you've grown up thinking is rubbish today. And it's not. Just as your generation has expectations, the last one had expectations. They're just different.

Forget corner offices – most of my friends just want a contract! We actually crave security. Having listened to what you've said these past couple of months, I feel that you've engaged with the consumer independently of the press and are cutting out the middleman of journalism. As an aspiring journalist, am I becoming obsolete?
Figure it out, Hannah. I mean, honestly, I feel like that's your job. [Laughs] In fact, you've got a dream of a job, because there has never been so much written content about what's happening in the world, yet we all need a filtered point of view to make sense of it. There is no industry that shouldn't be feeling challenged. We're living through the next industrial revolution, and it's a bloody exciting time to be starting a career, because you'll be shaping it. You have to put your head above the parapet, and when you do that, you can be shot at, and that's scary. But go figure it out.

Did you ever think when you arrived at Burberry that you would attain this extraordinary level of personal success?
[Long pause] Without being disingenuously humble, I don't see my time

'I think the idea that a change in operational functions might affect creativity is fundamentally patronising to a designer and offensive as a concept.'

'Going into that luxury watch shop as an 18-year-old, was the most intimidating situation I've ever been in. I was belittled, and made to feel inadequate.'

at Burberry as some great success, because I see what we still have to do. I can see that we as a team have been successful. I can see that I've been recognized in different ways as the leader of much of the change. I certainly never wanted to be a 'personality', and I felt very uncomfortable with it, particularly in the first couple of years when I just didn't enjoy it all. In fact, I almost didn't take the job because I realized the job would entail having to be a spokesperson, and as soon as you are the ambassador, whether you like it or not, people want to know who's behind the company. And I get it, because I want to know that; I want to know what they stand for and what they do. But I felt very uncomfortable with it, just on a personal level. So, to answer your question, I find the whole notion of 'success' a bit strange.

What are the metrics of success for yourself? How do you define success?
My life has always been quite extreme. I've had, and have, the most extraordinary joy on a personal level. But also the most extraordinary sadness on a personal level. And my home life, my family life, is my foundation for everything. This is my passion, but if I'm not happy at home, I find this really tough. So, success for me is whether I feel serene as a person. Whether I have the right balance in my life. The success of the business, and its financial success or recognition, is unbelievably rewarding, and makes you feel very proud. But if you don't have that foundation of serenity at home, for me, it becomes meaningless.

How have difficult times in your personal life affected the creative process for you as a fashion designer? If at all.
Interestingly, at the most difficult period of my life, I did a collection that was the sunniest, whitest collection of my career. It was a David Hockney-inspired collection in 2004. I find that a very difficult one to answer, because I immersed myself in work. But that was a very particular period. I'm not sure I became more or less creative. I certainly wasn't happy. But I don't know how it might've affected my work. It's just really important to have that outlet. Also, I think you need to connect to a world outside the industry, and that's what your friends and family do. They help you connect to something bigger.

Do you ever not think about Burberry?
Yes. I've got two very young girls, and they're very good at putting things into perspective, because when I'm with them, it's all about being with them. Like, this morning, I made sure that I didn't leave the house until eight o'clock, because I wanted breakfast with my girls, and to do something normal. So I'm actually not bad at compartmentalizing when I'm with my family and friends. When I'm with them, it's us, a little gang.

When do you find yourself being the most creative or productive? Miuccia Prada says it's at six in the morning, when she's half awake; Raf Simons finds it's late at night, when he's trying to go to sleep. Is there a particular moment for you?
I used to always think it was afternoons, but these days it's just whenever I can be 100-percent focused and free, and when I don't have hundreds of people needing answers from me. I'm not someone who works particularly well at night, and I'm not good if I'm with my family and friends. It goes back to what we were saying about compartmentalizing. If someone calls and says, 'Hey, you've got to design this collection', I'd have to leave the family, and go and immerse myself in that task. I'm not one of these people who can be having dinner with everyone, while saying, 'Ah yes, let's do red! Blue! Green!' I'm not that person. I'm not flippant. I'd like to be breezy, but I'm not.

How do you deal with stress and the demands of the job?
Fortunately, I'm not a very stressy person. My personality is quite relaxed, and I think that's because I'm annoyingly responsible. So it's kind of, 'I've done my best; I can't do better.'

Are there times you consider personally taking some time out or moving on to a different challenge elsewhere, or simply bowing out at the top of your game?
Yes. I have in the past. I don't at the moment, though. I like reinvention, and I feel like we're at the beginning of a reinvention again, and I obviously feel excited about that. I'm crazy busy the whole time, but when I love what we're doing, there's nothing better. It's a cliché, but really it's like a drug.

Do you think that will continue?
I honestly, genuinely don't know. If I felt like I was just ticking along, I couldn't do it. It goes back to that thing of having to feel 100-percent present.

'As long as I am at Burberry, we will be bold and curious, and continue to test and trial and challenge ourselves. If we don't, we'll be left behind.'

Besides the digital revolution, the past few years in fashion have been defined by overnight stylistic revolutions – in places such as Saint Laurent, Gucci, Loewe, Céline. Is revolution necessary to stay relevant, and would you envisage such a radical stylistic change at Burberry at some point?
I do think about that. Time will help guide the answer to it. I just don't know, because you have to ask yourself, 'What is sustainable, and how quickly does change have to happen?' Right at the beginning, I was saying every five to seven years for me, but who knows. I know that period is getting shorter.

The three-year itch…
Yes. I just don't have an answer, but that's why it's such an intriguing time.

The way your actions at Burberry have triggered such debate makes this feel like a monumental time for you, for the company, for the industry. With the bit of distance that a day after the show can provide, how do you now feel?
I feel that I had underestimated the debate this would trigger within the industry. That really surprised me. But I feel very proud that, as a team we put our money where our mouth was, and I think we did it to the best of our ability. Whether that was good enough is still to be seen. I feel very proud that we talk about being an agile gang, and I think doing something like this, we proved to ourselves that when we need to be agile, we can be. But now I need some time. I need to get to the end of this week to reflect a little bit on what worked, and what didn't. And the operational side of things. But also, I need to philosophically question it all.

From a pure communications perspective – perhaps the most cynical perspective one could judge by – this seems like a success.
This is not a vanity project; it is something that I fundamentally believe is right for us. I guess it's made me feel that there are no rules, and we all have to create our own destiny. It's important to be bold, and not to be afraid of failure, because failure is quite constipating. It means you don't push yourself. I feel relieved that even after 15 years, I still feel confident enough to be bold. Because often, with experience, comes an increased sense of fear. You know of all the pitfalls, and you know that as a publicly listed company, there's a very big responsibility to our shareholders – and I don't take this stuff lightly. But ultimately, there's a reason for doing this; this was not just about wanting to create some noise. This was not a PR stunt. This was a very thoughtful decision to try new things. And as long as I am at Burberry we will be bold, and we will continue to be curious. We will continue to research and develop, to test and trial, and to challenge ourselves. If we don't, we'll be left behind.

Burberry September 2016

by the students of Professor Juergen Teller, Akademie der Bildenden Künste Nürnberg.

Photographs by Julie Batteux, Hannah Gebauer, David Haeuser, Claudia Holzinger, Christoph Kipp, Marie-Julie Loerch, Mateusz von Motz, Dominik Piotrowski, Alfred Rohn, Tomasz Skibicki, Michael Ullrich, Lilly Urbat.

Styling by Poppy Kain

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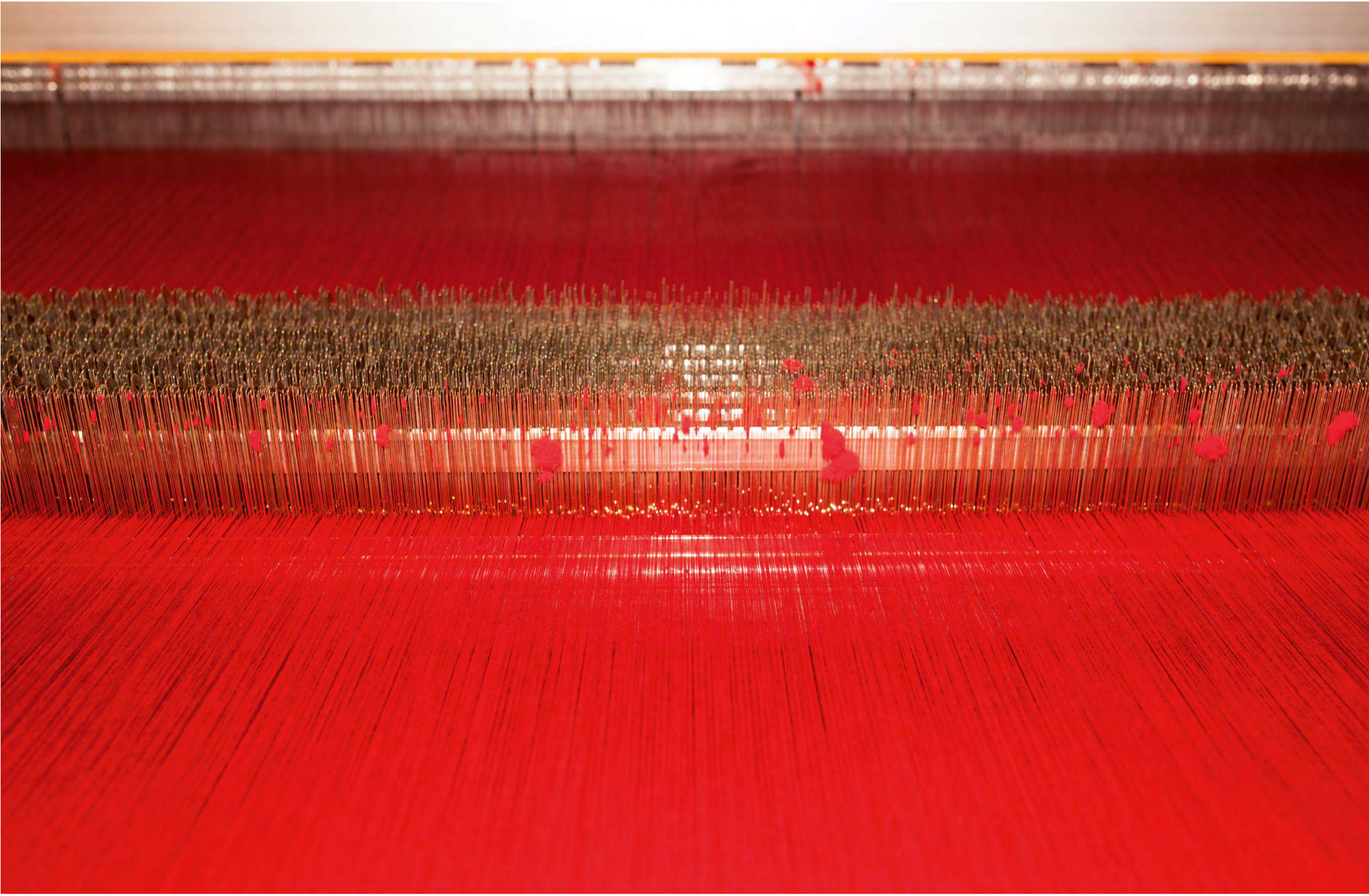
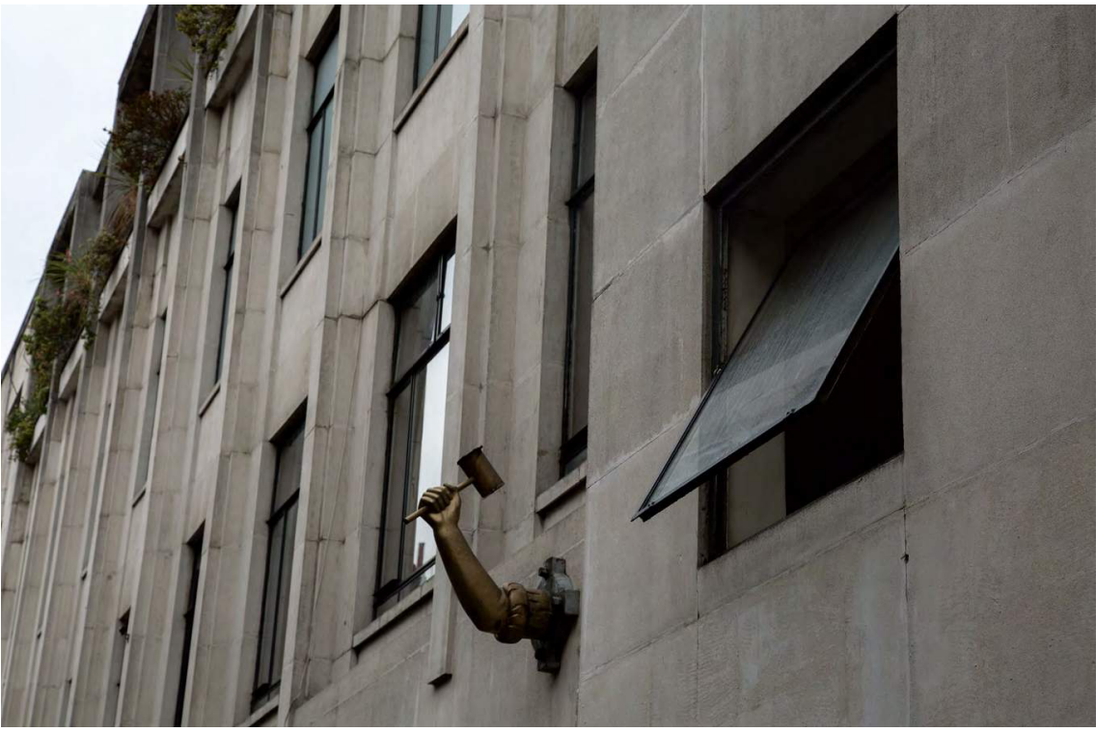




Hair: Louis Ghewy for Bumble and bumble, assisted by Guy Samuel. Make-up: Niamh Quinn, assisted by Libby James at LGA Management.
Production: Emanuele Mascioni at MAI London. Models: Flo Millar, Maya Gunn, Will Samways, Alex Dragulele.
Special thanks: Akademie der Bildenden Kuenste in Nuremberg, Central Saint Martins, Hywel Davies and Roger Tredre.

The glamour questionnaire: Charlotte Tilbury

By Loïc Prigent

What's your advice to a young model?
Really visualize what your dream campaign would look like and hold on to that. There will be challenges, darling – even at the very start of my career I had moments of self-doubt.

What's your advice to a veteran model?
If you stop being a model you can use your talents elsewhere, advising and supporting others in campaigns. Don't be limited in your thinking; you could also work on your own beauty blog.

What's your advice to a young English designer?
Always, darling, think about how clothes inform the make-up – it's good to work closely with make-up artists.

What word should we use instead of 'nude'?
Express the nuances of it by referring to the women who have inspired the shades.

What word should we use instead of 'modern'?
I always talk about 'next-generation' skincare and 'next-generation' colours; challenge the norm and push the needle.

Who are the two fashion people you would want to be sat next to at a fashion dinner?
Two?! I dream of having dinner with Coco Chanel, Estée Lauder and Helena Rubinstein. They inspire me every day.

Who are the photographers with the best vibe on set?
Mario Testino – he has the most incredible energy; Mert and Marcus – they push boundaries! Sølve Sundsbø – just incredible (and I shot my latest campaign with him).

What guidelines would you give us for a good selfie?
Hold the camera from the most flattering angle: instant contour and facelift. And you always need great lighting – it can change the entire photo.

What is your top tip for always looking confident?
Keep a lipstick in your handbag – it's instant glamour!

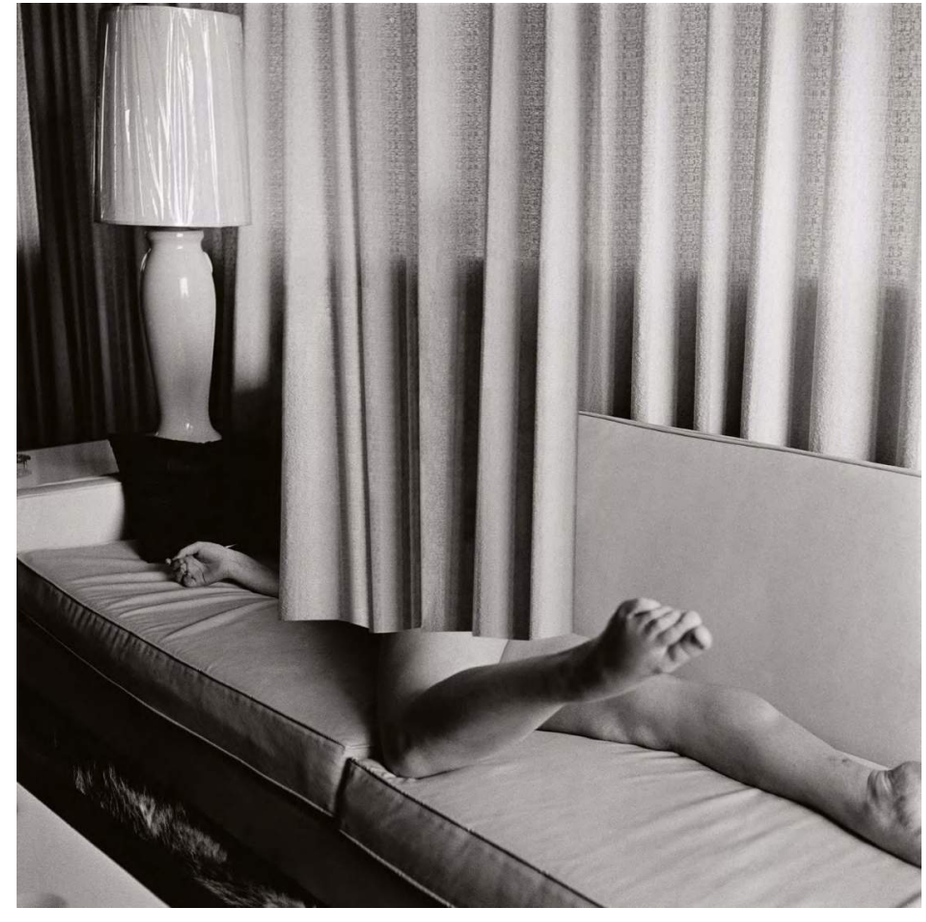
What was the last text you sent Kate Moss and what was her response?
Darling, I never give away those secrets, but we are in constant communication. I absolutely adore Kate.

What is the oldest and best make-up trick to look fabulous?
Contouring is an old Hollywood secret to create film-star killer cheekbones, and siren skin.

What do you do to avoid boredom on a set?
I never get bored on set. If I'm not creating magic moments, then I'm talking with my incredible Team Tilbury! There's never a spare moment with me.

What makes you happy today?
My handsome husband, George, and my two gorgeous boys, Valentine & Flynn.

Courtesy of Charlotte Tilbury



Eva Stenram, *Drape I*, 2011

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LOUIS VUITTON